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A State Divided: The Reality of Education in Maine

Gabrielle Raymond

A Senior Honors Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements of Honor Degree

Program

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Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Donald Davison

Rollins College

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Chapter 1: Introduction

From my personal experience growing up in Maine I have witnessed first-hand how there is little being done to improve educational achievement. Maine's average achievement score, in fourth grade mathematics, is 241 points. This is one point higher than the national average (The Nation's Report Card, n.da). In the 1990s Maine was outperforming other states with achievement scores ranging from 9 to 13 points higher than the national average (The Nation's Report Card, n.da). In the early 2000s the gap between Maine's average and the national average narrowed. Since this drop, Maine's achievement scores have remained stagnant at this lower level of achievement. In addition to this statewide drop, there large gaps between different cultural groups. The largest of these gaps being socioeconomic. This gap, when looking at fourth grade mathematics scores, is 22 points (The Nation's Report Card, n.db). In addition, there appears to be an emerging gap between rural and nonrural students. Observing these trends has led me to research why Maine is not doing more to create quality education for all students. I created three research propositions that look at different factors that explain why Maine is unable to do more to create higher quality education. My research will look at how these three factors have created an environment unfavorable to creating policy that increases educational attainment and achievement.

The first explanation is that large cultural divides creates polarization of education policy. These cultural divides create cleavages that make it difficult for policy to be broad and effective enough to bring benefits to all groups. One of these cleavages, and what I argue to be the most influential, is between rural and nonrural communities. 12 of the 16 counties in Maine are classified as rural. This means a larger proportion of the population lives in rural areas than urban. There are also economic divides, but these generally map onto the urban-rural divide.

Rural areas have more people living in poverty than urban areas. On average in rural counties 14% of the population is living in poverty whereas in urban counties 12% of the population is (U.S Census Bureau, 2018b). In addition, there is a \$9,000 gap between urban and rural median household incomes (U.S Census Bureau, 2018a). These economic differences derive from urban counties having more economic opportunities and having a more prosperous economy.

Southern Maine, where three of the urban counties are located, have many opportunities for employment, creating businesses, and attracts tourism. This creates a prosperous economy. The two most southern counties, which are urban, make up 46.9% of the state's GDP (Murphy, 2019). In comparison many towns in Northern Maine relied on logging, milling, and manufacturing. These jobs have become scarcer and are paying less. Northern Maine's economy has been doing worse since these industries have declined, and there are less opportunities for growth in these towns (Which Industries are Growing in Maine?, n.d). These counties generally are made up of smaller communities which offer lower level jobs and have fewer resources to boost the economy (Murphy, 2019). This urban-rural divide, and the differing economic and social conditions leads to polarization of education policy.

Due to the cleavages outlined above it is very difficult to create effective policy that will get the majority support it needs to pass. Interestingly, polarization transcends partisanship in education policy. The polarization derives from two divisions. These divisions are geography and level of government. The geographical divide is between urban and rural counties. The level of government divide is between local and state control. These two divisions generally map onto one another. Those who live in rural communities have a larger desire for local control. This polarization creates a policy cycle that impedes the creation and successful implementation of

long-term education policy. This cycle allows for stalemate and the reproduction of the status quo to dominate education policy rather than comprehensive educational reform.

The second explanation is the rise of populism. Maine is fertile for populism due to the cultural cleavages that exist. One of the most important cleavages that allows for populism to gain support and legitimacy is the urban-rural divide. Rural voters often perceive that their interests are being overlooked by their representatives. They feel they are being neglected in favor of other groups, both racial and economic. Rural people perceive that their tax money is being redirected to urban areas. This gives urban populations an unfair advantage. This urban group is perceived to be able to succeed easier than rural people are. Populist leaders are able to harness these feelings and make the rural group feel like they are being included and represented. This coupled with declining industry and lower level of educational achievement, allows for an increase support of populist candidates. The rise of populism and the high levels of third-party voters allowed Paul LePage to win the governor's race with only 38% of the vote (Moretto, 2014). He was able to use populist strategies such as "us versus them," anti-elitist, and deservingness rhetoric to garner support.

The election of a governor with populist tendencies, caused policy to be chosen to further political goals and to be rushed through legislation. This happened with the policy choice of proficiency-based learning. Governor Paul LePage adopted this policy as his choice without having a clear rationale or a clear implementation strategy. His goal of adopting this policy was not just to increase student achievement, but also push forward the values and initiatives that he campaigned on. That is why he linked the policy to increased school choice and creating charter schools. By having a governor with populist tendencies, education policy was transformed into a

political tool which created conflicting and conflated policy goals. This created policy that was out of touch with communities and created larger burdens than it did positive outcomes.

The third explanation is communities in Maine face budgetary constraints that are impacted by the social and economic conditions of their community. The funding formula for per pupil expenditures in Maine still relies heavily on property taxes. This creates high variation between the budget and resources that schools have. Wealthier districts, which are commonly found in urban areas, are able to provide higher amounts of supplemental funding. In addition, these communities are more willingly to increase taxes compared to rural areas. Rural people are highly opposed to increasing taxes due to the perception that the taxes they pay are being funneled out of their communities. They are more resistant to increasing taxes even when it would benefit them. The economic and social inequalities that persist through the funding formula between communities makes it challenging to reach agreement on education policy. It is particularly difficult to reach an agreement on how it is funded due to the perceived economic burden implementing policy will create. In addition, these inequalities lead to unequal education being given to students who are in these disadvantaged areas.

This paper is made up of five chapters. In Chapter 2, I outline the current problems education policy in Maine faces. I also, explain the policy being used as the case study. In addition, this chapter illustrates the challenges this policy created for communities across Maine. In Chapter 3, I explain the research method and data that will be used to study education policy in Maine. In Chapter 4, I report the results for each research proposition and discuss the key findings. In Chapter 5, I discuss my policy suggestions for education policy in Maine. I also relate this case study of Maine to larger trends that can be observed in the United States.

Chapter 2: Policy Problem

2.1 Current Policy Issue

Since the early 2000s Maine's achievement scores have become stagnant, while other comparable states have increased. Using fourth grade math scores, Maine is one point above the national average of 240 points (The Nation's Report Card, n.da). There are large gaps that persist in educational achievement. There is a 22-point gap between students who are not on free and reduced lunch and those who are (The Nation's Report Card n.db). The NEAP's national report card does not report a gap for urban and rural. The gap between students enrolled and not enrolled in free or reduced lunch can be helpful in gauging the urban and rural gap. This is due to rural communities in Maine having higher percentages of students in poverty than urban communities (U.S Census Bureau, 2018b). In tandem with these growing gaps, the cultural divides and economic conditions have continued to persist. As noted in the introduction, rural areas have higher percentages of people living in poverty and have lower median household incomes than those in urban areas (U.S Census Bureau, 2018a) In addition, these areas are smaller communities and have less economic opportunity than people living in urban communities (Murphy, 2019). The students in Maine are receiving varying levels of education depending on where they live and are not all equally prepared for the future. It is important that policy is created to ensure that all students are given an education that provides them with the tools they need to succeed in the future.

2.2 Case Study: Proficiency-Based Learning

Proficiency-based learning is being used as the case study policy. This policy was selected because it is the most recent education reform in the state, and it illustrates the common problems inherent in Maine's education policy. Proficiency-based learning, which was adopted

in 2012, was the first comprehensive education reform that had been implemented since 1997. In addition, the content of this policy reflects the characteristics that earlier attempts of education policy had. In 1997, the state created specific content areas that students needed to take classes in before being able to graduate (Field & Feinburg, 2019). This allowed for the state to acquire some control over education in Maine. Proficiency-based learning also created specific content areas but with new standards and mechanisms of evaluation (Silvernail, Stump, Duina, & Gunn, 2013, p. 3). Another reason this policy was selected is its ability to illustrate the common issues that education reform routinely faces in Maine. Proficiency-based learning exemplifies the challenges that the urban-rural divide creates and shows the variation the exists in funding and resources between these communities. This policy choice was selected as the case study due to its relevance and how it represents the challenges education policy is constantly facing.

Proficiency-based learning was adopted through the Act to Prepare Maine People for the Future Economy which was passed in May 2012. This Act mandated that all schools in Maine transition to standard-based diplomas rather than credit-based diplomas by 2017 (Silvernail, Stump, Duina, & Gunn, 2013, p. 3). This push for proficiency-based learning came out of the national accountability movement. In 1997, Maine passed the Maine Learning Results which created statewide standards in eight content areas, but this was never enforced within schools (Field & Feinburg, 2019) Proficiency-based learning created a mandate that would expand upon these standards and ensure that every district was enforcing them. This enforcement came from requirement diplomas to be given out dependent on a student's mastery of each content area (Silvernail, Stump, Duina, & Gunn, 2013, p. 3).

The national trend of accountability that can be seen in No Child Left Behind is what influenced the adoption of proficiency-based learning. This Act was created to help increase the

expectations of teachers and hold them accountable for teaching effectively and improving students' achievement scores (Silvernail, Stump, Duina, & Gunn, 2013, p. 6). No Child Left Behind was based on monitoring and tracking students' achievement in a systematic way, so progress and gaps could be tracked (Silvernail, Stump, Duina, & Gunn, 2013, p. 7). In Maine, No Child Left Behind did not produce widespread improvements. Only 23% of high school students were proficient in math and 35% were proficient in reading (Stump & Silvernail, 2014, p. 7). Maine suspected that the limited positive results were driven by the lack of coherence between districts on what skills should be taught and how these skills got relayed down to schools for implementation (Silvernail, Stump, Duina, & Gunn, 2013, p. 7). Even though the state identified having a mix of state and local control as contributing to the lack of positive outcomes, the legislature used this same outline for proficiency-based learning. The polarization of education policy, driven by the urban-rural divide, required proficiency-based learning to reproduce this problem. This helps to show that the legislature is unable garner enough support to increase state control, so the polarization reproduces failed systems of control which debilitate the implementation of policy that will bring widespread positive results.

This need for proficiency-based learning also came from the lack of preparedness that students have for their future. The goal of preparing students their future, whether that be higher education or a job, was acknowledged as a goal of public schools in the state. This was not only something that was acknowledged in Maine, but also in the Common Core movement. The Common Core creates a curriculum highlighting skills that are valuable in higher education and future employment. The Common Core was created from a partnership between government and business leaders. Proficiency-based learning was created through similar partnerships between businesses and legislators in Augusta, the capital of Maine (Stump & Silvernail, 2014, p. 8).

Businesses wanted to ensure that students were prepared for the future workforce so they lobbied legislators to create a system that would include proficiency in career preparedness.

The Department of Education and businesses in Augusta spearheaded the push for proficiency-based learning (Field & Feinburg, 2019). They found the low number of students proficient in reading and math to be alarming, and the solution to increasing proficiency would be a standard based learning system. Standard based learning creates progression in education based upon mastering skills. This requires students to master the current skill they are learning before they proceed to the next (Barnum, 2018). This ensures that students have basic skills before being asked to build upon them and learn more advanced skills. In theory this would lead to higher levels of success. The Department of Education also highlighted the need to have students prepared for their future beyond high school. The current system of accountability created a heightened focus on standardized testing which required teachers to neglect these career skills. Proficiency-based learning had the goal of changing that.

Governor LePage and his first Commissioner of Education, also advocated for proficiency-based learning once the Department of Education had publicized it as a possible solution. The Commissioner advocated for it on the basis that the federal government was creating policy, No Child Left Behind, but it was not a Maine solution. The federal government did not understand what Maine needed, so Mainers had to create a solution that would work for them. Governor LePage agreed with this and advocated for this policy. His framework for advocating for this Act is based off moving Maine's education system to "student first" education (LePage, 2013a).

Governor LePage argued that too much of the education budget was going to union members and administrators and not enough was going into the classrooms. Proficiency-based

learning would ensure teachers were engaging their students in rigorous work. In addition, it would hold teachers even more accountable. Accountability would be operationalized through rigorous performance standards and through tracking each student's proficiency throughout the year. In addition, he linked proficiency-based learning to increased school choice. One aspect of this choice is the student now have a choice of what type of work they want to produce. With proficiency-based learning students could choose to write papers, take tests, create portfolios, or do projects to show they have mastered a skill (Stump & Silvernail, 2014). The second choice was in where a student went to school. Before this Act was passed Maine had no charter schools and a limited number of private schools. After this Act was passed, the first charter school was created which lead to creation of more over the years. Governor LePage used this policy as a vehicle for market-oriented education reforms. By using the policy for this it creates conflicting and conflated goals which produced more challenges in successfully envisioning the implementation and costs associated with this policy.

The purpose of this Act was to create statewide standards that all school districts would have to uphold in order for students to graduate. This would mitigate the inequalities in education that previously persisted between communities in Maine. Graduation is dependent on being proficient in every skill and it allows for students to move at their own pace. Proficiency-based learning removes grades based off of age and credit. A student can graduate at sixteen after two years of high school or graduate at twenty-one after five years of high school (Silvernail, Stump, McCafferty, & Hawes, 2014, p. 20). The requirement of everyone mastering the same skills at their own pace, would create an equal education for every student no matter what school they attended.

2.3 Challenges of Proficiency-Based Learning

The implementation of proficiency-based learning had different impacts depending on the economic and social conditions of a school. The school districts that are likely to be the losers of this policy are those that are located in rural and low-income areas. These schools do not have the resources to implement proficiency-based learning in a way that is beneficial for the school and students. These schools will have a harder time ensuring there are teachers to teach in all eight content areas. They likely do not have comprehensive courses in content areas like arts, world language, and career and education development. They would have to hire more teachers in order to create and offer these new classes.

This policy's goal was to minimize the achievement gap between high- and low-income students. This policy was targeted at these low income and low achieving schools, but without additional funding they were unable to fully implement this policy. These schools could only reach a standard referenced system rather than the standard based system this Act required (Silvernail, Stump, McCafferty, & Hawes, 2014, p. 13). This type of system uses standards to guide the curriculum and assessment of students but allows for progression without mastering skills (Silvernail, Stump, McCafferty, & Hawes, 2014, p. 13). The additional burdens that are outlined below were overlooked by the legislature when passing this policy. When proficiency-based learning was passed, there was no clear implementation plan. The increased monetary burden was not initially calculated because the legislature did not fully comprehend how proficiency-based learning would look in practice. The policy was created with good intention, but the unanticipated costs and burdens created a flawed policy.

The first burden these schools face is implementing proficiency-based learning requires teachers to change their curriculum and for schools to foster a new culture of learning (Stump &

Silvernail, 2014, p. 25). The majority of the schools in Maine did not have any standards created for graduation before this mandate, so a whole new system needed to be created. Past curriculums could not be used because they were based upon traditional means of progression and grading. These do not align with proficiency-based learning. Administrators and teachers needed to decide the content of these standards, what level of work met proficiency, and what type of work would be included under which standard (Stump & Silvernail, 2014, p. 26).

Throughout this process they need to be in communication with students because as the Act indicated, there is a high level of student choice pertaining to both what students are learning and how they will demonstrate their proficiency (Silvernail, Stump, Duina, & Gunn, 2013, p. 5). This takes time outside of teaching and is a complex process. Schools with higher quality teachers, or those who are being paid more, will have an easier time accomplishing this than those who do not have these resources. In addition, there was acknowledgment that teachers needed to be compensated for the extra time it takes to create their system of proficiency (Silvernail, Stump, McCafferty, & Hawes, 2014, p. 15). This would be financial burden for schools who do not have the supplemental funding in their budgets to compensate teachers.

Not only are they required to change their curriculum and pacing of classes, but they also are given the option to switch to one to four grading. This style of grading is generally used with proficiency-based learning, so adopting it is recommended. To prove proficient, you need to get a three or a four. Many students and parents complained that it was impossible to get a four. Student were only awarded threes which represents an average grade equivalent to a low B. Teachers and administration did not explicitly state this, but they did talk about fours as something very few students could receive. This form of grading is difficult for both students and parents to comprehend and creates confusion in understanding how well a student is doing

(Silvernail, Stump, McCafferty, & Hawes, 2014, p. 14). Even further, it is difficult for admission officers at colleges and universities to understand (Silvernail, Stump, McCafferty, & Hawes, 2014, p. 22) Many college admission officers stated that they would find it hard to compare one to four grading or a proficiency-based diploma to the traditional grading and diploma. This inability to understand what these equate to, would create a disadvantage when applying to college.

These schools also needed to foster a specific culture of learning in order for students to succeed in proficiency-based learning. This culture ensures that students are engaged and feel responsible for their learning (Silvernail, Stump, Duina, & Gunn, 2013, p. 17). This is something low income schools likely do not already have in place, but affluent schools do. Higher income communities already have high expectation for students, and this creates a positive learning environment where students are expected to achieve. Teachers are giving students more rigorous work and are expected to succeed. This culture shift requires schools that do not already have this positive school climate to engage in a paradigm shift and requires the teacher and student role to be reimagined (Stump & Silvernail, 2014, p. 25).

Schools will need to create this culture for success, but through proficiency-based learning another contradictory culture emerges. Proficiency-based learning allows for students to retake their tests and redo projects until they can prove proficiency (Barnum, 2018). This makes students feel less driven and less motivated to push themselves. This fosters the creation of bad habits. One common habit is students not applying themselves because they feel no pressure or motivation to do so (Barnum, 2018). The allowance of redoing work would likely have a negative impact on students who already did not feel motivated further disadvantaging them.

In addition, these lower income schools often have higher levels of English learners and students who have learning disabilities but are not receiving accommodations. These students are adversely affected by proficiency-based learning. They get stuck on a certain skill for a prolonged period of time and cannot proceed. Since they are not receiving accommodations, they do not receive the help they need to become proficient (Silvernail, Stump, McCafferty, & Hawes, 2014, p. 17). This leads to low graduation rates for these populations, which is the opposite effect that this policy intended to have.

Not only do these schools face burdens for reworking their culture and curriculum, but they also will face monetary burdens. Students are not bound to stay in school by credit but rather proficiency. This allows students to stay in school for five or six years, and by state law Maine's public education system is required to be provided until the age of 20 (Silvernail, Stump, McCafferty, & Hawes, 2014, p. 20). Lower income and lower achieving schools will likely have more students that are in school for over four years. These schools cannot afford to have an increase in the school population for longer periods of time without any additional funding. Another financial burden is the creation of more classes. These low-income schools do not have the budget to hire more teachers, so they will struggle to fully be able to implement proficiency-based learning. Many of these schools do not require world language, but with proficiency-based learning this is required. They also must provide other content areas like the arts and democratic citizenship. Hiring more teachers to create and teach these classes is not financially feasible for these communities. These schools who were the target of the policy are left with the biggest burden. This is due to the political process creating conflicting and conflated goals of this policy. On the surface the policy has the goal to reduce achievement gaps, but the

legislators did not take into consideration the unanticipated costs and consequence this policy would bring.

Chapter 3: Methodology

My first research proposition is that there are cultural divides present in Maine and these create polarization of education policy. I expect for there to be large differences between the urban and rural communities in Maine. These differences, and the polarization that this creates, will make it more difficult for the legislature to implement education policy that will help to increase the educational achievement. This increase in polarization is expected to generate more resistance to creating and implementing statewide education policy. In order to establish these cultural differences, I will run cross tabulations using the Cooperative Congressional Election Study Survey of 2010¹. In order to see how this polarization impacts education policy, I will analyze the roll call votes for proficiency-based learning. I expect that the cultural divides will be present, and there will be a division between partisanship and geography.

My second research proposition is that the election of a populist governor allowed for the creation of policy that was unsustainable and out of touch with the needs of students in Maine. Governor LePage used education policy as a vehicle to implement market-based education reform and to mobilize his base. This policy had conflated and conflicting goals and was rushed through legislation. First, I will establish Governor LePage's populist rhetoric by comparing him to Governor Scott Walker. In addition, I will use quotes from Governor LePage to observe the populist rhetoric he used pertaining to proficiency-based learning. To observe if the policy was out of touch and unsustainable, I will compare the roll call votes for the preliminary vote to pass proficiency-based learning and the roll call votes to repeal proficiency-based learning. I expect

¹ The Cooperative Congressional Election Study Survey of 2010 is a joint project between Harvard and MIT. It is a large-N (50,000 plus) which permits state-level analysis. The study is run in two sections the pre-election and the post-election. The pre-election asks questions demographic questions, political information, and voting intentions. The post-election asks about items related to what they just voted one. <https://cces.gov.harvard.edu>

that the preliminary vote was divided on geography, and the final vote was supported by all communities due to the policy being out of touch with Maine communities.

My third research proposition is that the school budget and community resources that are present within districts will create challenges in reaching an agreement what kind of policy can be implemented. I anticipate that communities with lower resources will be more resistant to adopting education policy that they perceive as placing financial burdens on their community. I expect that overall there will be lower per pupil expenditures in rural areas due to the inability to raise supplemental funding through property taxes. I also expect that as per pupil expenditures increase achievement scores will also increase. In addition, these differences will influence the type of support communities give to education policy. I expect that as community resources decrease achievement scores will also decrease. To observe if this is accurate, I will use data from the Stanford University Center for Education Policy to estimate the impacts of budget resources on educational achievement in urban and rural schools in Maine². I will also use the budget information from the Maine Department of Education, to look at how budgets differ district to district. Additionally, I will look at roll call votes and see if community resources effect what policy is supported.

² The Stanford University Center for Education Policy has a project called Stanford education Data Archive this is an initiative with the goal of harnessing data to help improve educational opportunity for all children. The data file has data on educational conditions, racial and socioeconomic composition, segregation, achievement gaps, and other factors impacting education. <https://cepa.stanford.edu/projects>

Chapter 4: Results

4.1 Cultural Divides and Polarization

This section examines the effects cultural divides and ideology within the state have on education policy. It is important to look at the ideology in Maine because this will influence the types of policy that are proposed and implemented. Overall, if the state has a specific set of values such as preference for local control and an anti-tax, this will influence the type of education policy that is proposed and adopted. In addition, the cultural differences that persist in Maine are expected to create polarization. This polarization is expected to be driven by partisanship and geography. It is anticipated that partisanship and ideology map onto geography. In addition, it is expected that there will be a difference in the approval of the economy and the role of government depending on what type of county someone lives in. This addresses the divide between local and state control that is also found to polarize education policy. These expectations follow what Katherine Cramer found from her research in Wisconsin. People who lived in rural areas were generally more conservative and felt overlooked and neglected by their state government; rural people believed they experienced distributive injustice. These cultural divides are expected to lead to an increase in polarization. This polarization creates an unfavorable environment for the creation and adoption of education policy. This is primarily due to the polarization that creates the need to allocate more control to local governments than the state.

4.1.1 Previous Research on Cultural Divides and Impacts on Politics

A newly developed field of research is the urban-rural divide. Two theorists that have researched this are Katherine Cramer and Arlie Hochschild. They both have looked at how rural people feel isolated and neglected, and the implications these feelings have on politics. These

feelings of neglect have led rural people to support more conservative candidates and has given more opportunities for populist candidates to mobilize this demographic. The focus of Katherine Cramer's research in *The Politics of Resentment* is rural is more than just a location but is an identity (Cramer, 2016). This rural identity becomes the lens they interpret policies through and is how they create their preferences. As income inequality has increased, low income people's preferences have tracked closely with conservative preferences (Cramer, 2016). In particular, they have moved towards opposing redistributive policies.

Redistributive policy is a policy that takes collective resources and distributes these to other groups with the goal of creating higher equality. This type of policy generally comes as a subsidy or voucher, so a policy such as the supplementary nutritional aid program uses vouchers to redistribute resources to these people. Many people in opposition to redistributive policy view the recipients as undeserving. This fuels their opposition towards these types of policy. Education policy is not categorized as a redistributive policy, but many people view it as similar due to it being funded through property taxes. These similarities are present, but people do not classify education the same way they would welfare, a typical redistributive policy. These redistributive policies would generally bring economic benefit to rural people, but they have shifted to oppose these. This shift has happened partially due to the fact that conservatives have been able to appeal to these individuals by redirecting focus to social and cultural issues and away from economic issues (Cramer, 2016).

Cramer finds this political shift in preferences comes from a rural consciousness. Rural consciousness explains why rural people are making decisions that seem on the surface to go against their best interests. The theory looks at three perceptions that rural identifying people have which shape the lens they see policy through. The first perception is the most influential.

This perception is rural people believe that urban areas hold more the power. They are able to set the agenda for what issues are being discussed and how they are addressed. Even further than this, rural people believe that their representatives and state government are not responsive and are dismissive to their needs. They think the state creates policy that disproportionately benefits urban areas (Cramer, 2016). Cramer found that rural residents complained that the government was creating unfunded mandates that did not benefit rural areas (Cramer, 2016). This is how rural residents perceived proficiency-based learning. They were mandated to implement it but did not perceive this as addressing the issues present in their communities. Therefore, proficiency-based learning affirms the belief that the state is disconnected from the rural needs and challenges.

The second and third perception explain how rural people oppose policy that would benefit them. Rural people believe that their values are different than those of urban people. They perceive themselves as facing more economic hardship than urban people (Cramer, 2016). They believe they work harder than urban people but are not receiving the same benefit. Rural people believe the state government is mishandling their tax dollars and directing them into urban areas rather than back into their community (Cramer, 2016). This creates high levels of resentment towards property taxes, and makes rural communities oppose increasing these. In addition, they are anti-government because they view the policy the government is creating to be burdening them rather than addressing the issues they have. These two perceptions, coupled with the first, lead rural people to distrust their state government and to value local control and oppose taxation. This confirms my expectation that the urban-rural divide will polarize education policy and create disagreement about how to fund education and who controls it.

Arlie Hochschild, another researcher, furthers this research on neglect and isolation and its impact on group association through her book *Strangers in Their Own Land*. Her research focuses on people's choices being based off of feeling rather than rational decision making. Hochschild explains these decisions are ignited through "deep stories." Deep stories are created to make people feel something. They neglect facts and reality and create an emotional response. The sole purpose of deep stories is to get the person hearing the deep story to feel a certain emotion (Hochschild, 2016, p. 16). These deep stories have created a narrative for white lower income people to feel like they are the group being forgotten and overlooked. These deep stories easily adopted and reproduced by groups due to people surrounding themselves with those who are similar to them with both attitudes and income.

The deep story Hochschild observed narrated how a majority group, white people in the United States, could feel like a marginalized group. This marginalization comes from the perception that others are "cutting the line" in the American Dream (Hochschild, 2016). These people believe that according to the American Dream those who work hard will move up the economic ladder. Those "cutting the line" are not playing the game fairly but still are moving ahead of these people who are (Hochschild, 2016, p. 137). These "line cutters" get to reap the benefits. The only way "line cutters" are able to move up the ladder is due to the creation of redistributive policy that gives special treatment to minorities (Hochschild, 2016). There is a perceived sense of unfairness, particularly towards poor and near poor people, that comes from policies such as SNAP and disability checks. This has made the group adhering to this belief, white lower income people, to feel neglected and left to fend for themselves. This feeling of neglect in turn creates distaste for the government and suspicion of new policies.

This perceived special treatment “line cutters” get through redistributive policy, creates a feeling of betrayal from those who are not getting it (Hochschild, 2016). This betrayal is then coupled with the trends in the economy, increase in opportunity for minorities, and “cat calls” from Democrats and Liberals. These “catcalls” are comments about these people having backwards views that are sexist or homophobic. These catcalls always take the form of attacking this group for having views that are believed to be incorrect by those outside of the group. This also has to do with those not in the group attacking them or looking down on them for how religious these communities are. This has led to white lower income and middle-class citizens to feel like they are being left out of the system (Hochschild, 2016). Both of these researchers are able to find how one’s identity shapes the way that they perceive policy. They find that rural people and low-income people perceive the government as creating policy that is unfavorable to their communities. This feeling of neglect makes this group distrust the government and value local control. This confirms my research proposition that cultural divides drive polarization and create an unfavorable environment to implementing statewide education policy.

4.1.2 Cultural and Ideological Divides in Maine

It is expected that there will be differences between rural and urban communities that will affect education policy in Maine. In Maine there are 16 counties and of these 12 are rural. According to the 2010 census, Maine was tied with Vermont for being the most rural state. At this time 61.3% of the state lived in a rural community. That translates to 814,819 people living in rural areas compared to 513,542 people who live in urban areas (Wickenhesier, 2012). By using the Cooperative Congressional Election Study Survey of 2010, the year that Governor Paul LePage was elected, I was able to run cross tabulations comparing the answers from voters who

lived in rural areas to those who lived in urban areas. Using these crosstabulations will allow for differences to be observed and established.

The variables I selected establish the cultural differences that effect the lens in which people in rural and urban areas see policy through. These variables are party identification, ideology, importance of religion, favorability of the Tea Party, perception of the national economy, and position on increasing taxes. All of these variables were identified by Cramer and Hochschild to be fueling the urban-rural divide and the feelings of resentment and neglect. As Cramer found rural people in Wisconsin were generally Republicans and had more conservative values. They also perceived themselves as facing more economic hardships than urban residents. In addition, Hochschild found that one of the ways the feelings of resentment is fueled by the perception that others make fun of how religious rural people are. By using variables that Cramer and Hochschild identified as effecting the lens that people see policy through, I will be able to show Maine follows this same pattern. In addition to following Cramer's findings I will use the approval of the Legislature and Governor. This will allow for what level of government control these communities prefer.

| Figure 4.1.1: Statewide Party Identification | | |
|---|------------|-------------|
| Democrat | Republican | Independent |
| 28.3% | 25.4% | 39.1% |

Cooperative Congressional Election Study Survey of 2010

| Figure 4.1.2: Percentage of Urban and Rural People's Party Identification | | | |
|--|----------|------------|-------------|
| | Democrat | Republican | Independent |
| Urban | 32.6% | 23.6% | 35.7% |

| | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Rural | 23.6% | 27.3% | 40.6% |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|

Cooperative Congressional Election Study Survey of 2010

Figure 4.1.1 shows that the largest party Mainers identify with is the Independent party. 39.1% of Mainers consider themselves Independents. In addition, there are slightly more Democrats than Republicans across the state. 28.3% of Mainers identify as Democrats and 25.4% of Mainers identify as Republicans. Furthermore, a larger percent of the urban population identifies as Democrat, 32.6%, compared to Republican, 23.6%. The largest percentage of the urban population identifies as Independent, 35.7%. The rural population also has the largest percentage of their population identifying as Independents, 40.6%. After this, a larger percentage of the population identifies as a Republican, 27.3%, compared to a Democrat, 23.6%. The limited tilt in partisanship between urban and rural areas was unexpected, but this demonstrates that geography drives polarization more than partisanship. This finding was confirmed through an interview with a state legislator who serves on the Education Committee. She stated that the Education Committee is the least partisan committee. All of the members, no matter their party affiliation, want to create policy that is child focused and will ensure all students across Maine are getting an equal education.

This survey goes further and asks people whether they identify as liberal, conservative, or middle of the road. 33.9% of the urban group identified themselves as very or somewhat liberal compared to 28.1% of the rural group. The difference between what urban and rural people identify as continues when looking at who identifies in higher numbers as very or somewhat conservative. 39.6% of the urban group identified as very or somewhat conservative whereas 51% of the rural group does. In addition, more people from urban areas identify as middle of road, 22.6%, than people in rural areas, 17.2%. This shows that overall higher percentages of

people from both urban and rural areas are identifying as conservative. Also, there is a higher number of people from urban areas that identify as middle of the road. This leads to an overall more conservative leaning population. The ideology of conservatism bleeds through partisan lines, and illustrates that overall Maine is a more conservative leaning state. This drives the polarization between local and state control which contributes to the inability to create education policy that will allow for widescale change. This confirms my expectation that cultural divides will create polarization.

There are also differences in their assessment of the economy depending on if a person is from an urban or rural area. There were 23.6% of people from urban areas who thought the economy was doing better or much better compared to 13.9% of rural people. Overall there was a higher percentage of people who reported the economy was doing worse or much worse, but this was reported in higher percentages from people in rural areas. In rural areas 55.7% of people reported the economy was doing worse or much worse compared to 46.5% of people from urban areas. The higher percent of rural people perceiving the economy as doing worse consistent with Cramer and Hochschild's findings. They found that rural people perceive themselves as experience economic hardship. This finding makes rural people in Maine less supportive of new education policies that are perceived as putting higher financial burden on these rural communities. This illustrates that rural communities act upon self-interest in addition to their rural identity when creating preferences. These rural communities are able to correctly perceive the financial burden that education policy will place on their community, and vote against it knowing they cannot afford this cost.

This survey also asked about the favorability of the Tea Party. By observing if there is a difference in the favorability of the Tea Party, the support urban and rural people have for their

values can be determined. The two important values that we can observe through the favorability of the Tea Party is anti-tax and desire for local control. There are not large differences observed between how favorable the Tea Party was depending on what kind of county a person lives in. 36.5% of people who lived in urban areas favored the Tea Party and 38.9% of people who lived in rural areas favored the party. This similarity maps onto people who do not favor the Tea Party. 42.6% of urban people did not favor the Tea party and 40.2% of people from rural areas did not favor the party. The similarity between how rural and urban people feel about the Tea Party reflects the overall beliefs that state holds. The state of Maine is generally an anti-tax or low tax state, and local control is highly valued which aligns with the Tea Party. The majority of the state holds these beliefs. This makes it more challenging to create education policy with positive outcomes that does not require more state control or additional funding. This illustrates how the desire for local or state control polarize education policy.

In addition to this, there were differences between urban and rural areas when asking about the importance of religion. When looking at how many urban people reported religion to be very or somewhat important it can be seen that 56.1% of people agreed with this whereas 66.6% of rural people agreed with this. There was an even larger difference when looking at what percentage of each group saw religion is not too important or not at all important. 44.1% of urban people reported that religion was not too important not at all important compared to 23.3% of rural people. This shows there is less importance placed upon religion in the urban areas. This helps illustrate how urban and rural people feel different from one another.

This survey also asked people who listed a balanced budget as the first issue they were concerned with how they would prefer for the budget to become balanced. The results were similar for both people from rural and urban areas. There were three options to pick from: cut

defense spending, cut domestic spending, and raise taxes. For the option of cut defense spending, 24.1% of urban people chose this and 19.7% of rural people chose this. For the option of cut domestic spending, 20.2% of urban people chose this and 19.3% of rural people chose this. Lastly, for raising taxes only 7.9% of urban people chose this and 8.8% of rural people chose this. This shows that across all counties in Maine there is low support for raising taxes. This is something that the majority of the state holds as a value and contributes to the inability to increase and agree on education funding.

The last variables were the approval of the Legislature and Governor. The Governor this survey is asking the approval of is Governor Baldacci. He was a Democrat who served two terms as governor. It was observed that larger percentages both urban and rural people disapproved of these institutions. Of the urban group 27.5% approved of the legislature compared to 64.6% who disapproved. The same trend follows for the rural group. 32.5% of the rural group approved of the Legislature whereas 62.3% disapproved. This same trend of higher levels of disapproval from both urban and rural areas can be observed for approval of the Governor. Of the urban group 39.9% approved whereas 56.2% disapproved. In the rural group, 35.4% approved of the Governor compared to 59.1% who disapproved. This illustrates that overall Mainers do not approve of the state government and this leads them to support local control over state control.

These findings align with what Cramer and Hochschild found through their research. Through Cramer's research in Wisconsin, she found that living in a rural area and identifying as Republican was not a coincidence and comes from the identity that they form living in a rural area (Cramer, 2016). This was consistent in Maine with more rural people being Republicans compared to urban people, but the majority of rural people surveyed identified as Independents which differed from Cramer's findings. In addition, the data shows that rural people perceive that

the economy is doing worse compared to urban people. This aligns with the finding Cramer had that rural people perceive themselves as not getting their fair share (Cramer, 2016). It also aligns with what Hochschild found with lower income people believing that redistributive policy is allowing other groups to cut them in line and do better than them without working for it. The rural people in Maine have this same sentiment that they are being overlooked and are not getting the same economic gains that people in urban areas are.

Lastly, Hochschild found that when elites used people's religious beliefs against them it created more feelings of resentment and neglect (Hochschild, 2016). As it can be seen, in Maine the rural population has a higher percentage of people who think of religion as somewhat or very important compared to urban people. The rural people, as Hochschild found, often perceive people as making fun and attacking them for believing religion to be important. This gives them another reason to feel as though their representatives are overlooking them and not giving them a voice in politics and leads to politics of resentment.

4.1.3 Impacts on Education Policy in Maine

There are two large challenges that creation of education policy faces in Maine. These are lack of funding and polarization. In Maine not all school departments³ have equal budgets. There are high levels of variation that persists between school departments. Wealthier communities are able to use property taxes to generate supplemental funding. Equalizing this variation is more difficult due to the anti-tax ethos in Maine. This makes raising taxes to generate more funding for education a challenge. In particular, rural communities are more resistant to increases in taxes because they believe they are not getting their fair share returned. Urban communities are also resistant to increases in taxes, as the finding above show. The difference is, these communities

³ The State of Maine refers to School Districts as School Departments

are more willing to compromise because they do not perceive the burden to be as large as rural communities do. This shows that the state ideology creates an inability to reach an agreement on education policy that requires a financial increase. The statewide anti-tax value creates low support for increase taxes in order to generate and funnel more money into education. In addition, often education policy created in the Education Committee is not proposed to the entire legislature because they know it will not be passed due to increase costs that would require taxes to be raised. This confirms the research proposition that polarization makes it challenging to reach an agreement on new education policy and this inability allows for the status quo to reproduce itself.

As stated, there are divides that persist in education policy and create polarization. These divides are geographical and level of government. The geographical divide is between urban and rural. The level of government divide is between local and state control. The group that would be most resistant to education policy created by the legislature would be those who are rural and value local control. It is likely that those who are rural also value local control, and this can be observed through what Cramer identifies as rural consciousness. Those who live in rural areas use this ruralness to define identity. This creates the lens they see policy options through. They perceive that the government overlooks them and neglects their needs when creating policy. They also do not think they are getting their fair share. They perceive the urban areas as getting more money funneled into their communities through the taxes collected by the state. Rural people particularly resent property tax because they perceive they are not getting their fair share back (Cramer, 2016). This resentment affects education policy in particular because school funding is affected by these taxes. School budgets still rely on property taxes to provide schools' supplemental funding. These rural people are more opposed to the increase in property taxes

even though it will assist them. In addition, rural people are particularly opposed to mandates. They oppose mandates because they believe that their needs are not being taken into consideration when these are created (Cramer, 2016). They perceive mandates as fiscal burdens that will not address the needs of their community.

It is not exclusively their rural consciousness that is driving them to favor of local control, but they also act on their self-interest. These state mandates generally do create financial burdens that these lower income communities do not feel they are able to endure. In addition, rural identity cannot be the only reason for valuing local control because urban communities in Maine also favor this. The results from the Cooperative Congressional Election Study Survey showed that urban and rural people disapprove of the state government at a similar level. Both of these groups had around 60% of people reporting this disapprove of the Governor and Legislature. The difference between urban and rural communities desire for local control is urban communities are more willing to compromise and relinquish some of their control. They are willing to do this because it does not have as large of a financial burden for them and they perceive the policy as attempting to solve challenges their communities are facing. This higher chance of compromise coming from urban communities can be seen when looking at the roll call votes for proficiency-based learning. By comparing the roll call votes on the preliminary and repealing the act, shows that urban communities ultimately want local control and is they vote to repeal proficiency-based learning in favor of having less state intervention in education.

Both government level and geography are creating polarization, but the polarization that is creating larger challenges for education policy is level of government. Generally, the tension between state and local control has plagued education policy. This tension can be seen to paralyze past education reforms. Each reform is unable to learn from the failures of the past

because local control is given more attention than coherent policy. What is reproduced is incoherent measures of success and difficulty in implementation. This occurs because the state only creates the outline for the policy and the individual schools create the body. In the case of proficiency-based learning the state created the content areas and the requirement to demonstrate proficiency, but each school was able to decide what to teach in the content areas and how to define proficiency.

The legislature has to accommodate the desire for local control in order receive enough support to pass policy, but this ends up prohibiting the creation of policy holds schools accountable in comparable ways. In addition, it does not allow for the goal of improving achievement and attainment for all students to be achieved due to the lack of accountability. Each school will create a system that is biased to allowing each their students to succeed and graduate. This means the systems are not able to be compared from school to school. The consequence of the conflict between local and state control is policy goals are conflicting and conflated. This confirms my research proposition that polarization plagues the policy making process and makes legislators create policy that allows for the status quo to persist and no large-scale change in education to be made.

4.1.4 Impacts on Proficiency-Based Learning

Proficiency-based learning is able to demonstrates how polarization creates challenges in reaching an agreement on education policy. Proficiency-based learning reproduces the polarization that other education reform in Maine has. Looking at this will allow for the cycle of education policy to be observed. The goal of proficiency-based learning was to create a statewide system that requires all students to demonstrate proficiency in same content areas. This would ensure that all students would receive an equal education and be equally equipped for the future.

The polarization required this policy to make large changes to provide local control. This high level of local control is was caused the policy to fail. This confirms my research proposition that polarization creates an unfavorable environment to implementing successful education policy.

To establish this polarization effected proficiency-based learning, I will compare roll call votes broken down by partisanship and geography.

| Figure 4.1.3: Partisanship Vote in The House of Representatives on The Act to Prepare Maine People for the Future Economy | | | |
|--|------------|------------|------------|
| | Yay | Nay | Overall |
| Democrat | 42 (48.3%) | 26 (46.4%) | 71 (47.4%) |
| Republican | 43 (49.4%) | 29 (51.8%) | 76 (50.6%) |
| Independent | 2 (2.3%) | 1 (1.2%) | 3 (2%) |
| Total | 87 (100%) | 56 (100%) | 150 (100%) |

L.D. 1422 April 10, 2012

| Figure 4.1.4: Partisanship Vote in The Senate on The Act to Prepare Maine People for the Future Economy | | | |
|--|------------|-----------|------------|
| | Yay | Nay | Overall |
| Democrat | 14 (51.9%) | 1 (14.3%) | 15 (44.1%) |
| Republican | 12 (44.4%) | 6 (85.7%) | 18 (52.9%) |
| Independent | 1 (3.7%) | 0 (0%) | 1 (2.9%) |
| Total | 27 (100%) | 7 (100%) | 34 (100%) |

L.D. 1422 May 16, 2012

It can be seen through figure 4.1.3, that Democrats and Republicans both cast votes in favor of proficiency-based learning in similar percentages. Of the yes votes, 48.3% came from

Democrats and 49.4% came from Republicans. There is only a 1% difference between the percentage of Republicans and Democrats casting yes votes. Of the no votes 46.4% came from Democrats and 51.8% came from Republicans. This shows that there were higher number of casted no votes from Republicans, but overall the majority of the Republican party casted yes votes for proficiency-based learning. Overall more Republicans and Democrats voted yes, and they did this in similar percentages. This helps to exemplify the bipartisan nature of education policy in Maine. This illustrates the statewide trend of education policy being bipartisan, but having other having other dividing lines.

| Figure 4.1.5 Rural Versus Nonrural House of Representatives Vote on The Act to Prepare Maine People for the Future Economy | | | |
|---|------------|------------|------------|
| | Yay | Nay | Overall |
| Nonrural County | 50 (57.5%) | 25 (44.6%) | 75 (52.4%) |
| Rural County | 37 (42.5%) | 31 (55.4%) | 68 (47.6%) |
| Total | 87 (100%) | 56 (100%) | 143 (100%) |

L.D. 1422 May 16, 2012

| Figure 4.1.6 Rural Versus Nonrural Senate Vote on The Act to Prepare Maine People for the Future Economy | | | |
|---|------------|-----------|-----------|
| | Yay | Nay | Overall |
| Nonrural County | 15 (55.5%) | 2 (28.6%) | 17 (50%) |
| Rural County | 12 (44.5%) | 5 (71.4%) | 17 (50%) |
| Total | 27 (100%) | 7 (100%) | 34 (100%) |

L.D. 1422 May 16, 2012

Figure 4.1.5 shows that rural legislators were more likely to vote against the bill than the urban legislators. 55.4% of these came from rural representatives compared to 44.6% of this coming from nonrural representatives. It can also be seen that more rural representatives, 55.4%, cast no votes rather than yes votes, 42.5%. This same trend occurred in the senate, with 71.4% of the no votes were cast by rural senators and only 28.6% were cast by urban ones. In addition, 55.5% of the votes cast for yes came from urban senators and 44.5% came from rural ones. This illustrates there is a split between how urban and rural legislators vote. This is observed for geography and not for partisanship which illustrates that polarization is driven by geography rather than partisanship in Maine.

This polarization driven by local and state control was confirmed through interviews with a Maine principal and state legislator. When talking to the Principal of Cape Elizabeth High School, he noted that since he has been principal the state has attempted to create more state control 3 times. Every time that the state gets close to implementation, the school departments raise concerns about the lack of local control. These concerns and objections of state control make the state relinquish their control and local control is restored. This Principal acknowledges that his opinion on state and local control is in the minority. He wants there to be a higher level of state control, but when talking to the legislator she noted that the state control he wanted would never pass. The majority of the state wants local control, and the voting process is created to allow for large amounts of local control to remain. There is a constitutional requirement that if the state mandates any activity with a fiscal cost, the state needs to fund 90% of it or there needs to be support from over 2/3 of both chambers (Path of Legislation in Maine, n.d). This ensures that mandates are not easily accomplished, and local control can be kept. This helps to illustrate

that this polarization is not unique to proficiency-based learning but rather it impacts all education policy options.

The rural legislators voting to oppose the adoption of this policy illustrates the lens they use when looking at policy. These legislators perceived, and correctly saw, the burden that this policy would bring their communities. This policy, as explained in other sections, would be costly to implement due to the increase in courses offered and requiring teachers to work more on creating a new curriculum. Seeing the burdens their communities would face and urban communities would not, likely lead to the feeling of neglect. The policy was created without considering how it would affect rural schools in a harsher way than urban schools. Urban schools would be more likely to have resources to reach the minimum standards this Act required. These schools already were teaching in the mandates content areas and have supplemental funding, as the budget section illustrates, to pay the teachers for the extra work in creating a new curriculum. The rural schools did not have this advantage, so the policy would be harder and more costly for them to implement. Rural legislators also did not want to have the state creating a mandate that they had to follow. The issue of having a state mandate overlaps with the divide pertaining to local and state control.

The local versus state control divide can partially be seen through the urban-rural differences in voting. It can also be seen in the structure and implementation of the policy once it was passed. The first way this divide is able to be seen to effect policy is how they classified this Act when they were voting on it. This Act was not stated as a mandate. This was done purposefully because if the Act was proposed as a mandate then there would have to be a two-thirds vote rather than just a simple majority. Allowing for only a simple majority to pass this overriding the desire for local control was easier. Overarching local control was not given to

these school departments because the state determined eight content areas that needed to be taught and how progress needed to be tracked.

Though the state was given control over the content areas and how progress was tracked with student proficiency, school departments were given local control about what courses would fall under what category, what did proficiency look like, and how to allow children were to progress (Silvernail, Stump, McCafferty, & Hawes, 2014, p. 13). This allowed for each school department to have differing approaches that would fit their school's needs. This followed the cycle of education policy in the past, where the state created the outline of the policy and school departments created the body of the policy. This local control, which was needed in order to gain support and pass the policy, is what inevitably creates the repeal of the policy. The cycle persists, the one quality that is needed for a policy to succeed it what ends up leading to its failure. This happens over and over again in Maine education policy.

Once the schools began to implement this policy it became extraordinarily difficult. There was no way for the state to ensure they were correctly doing this, so it led to many schools doing nothing. The legislator I spoke with said when the schools were asked to report their progress after the first two years, they were unable to share how they were implementing proficiency-based learning. However, they shared the many challenges and questions they had about implementation. The schools all had different definitions and requirements to show proficiency. These were created at a level that would allow the most students in the school to succeed. In addition, schools did not understand what content areas were most important to implement first because this policy was rolled out in waves. In addition, there were struggles over what to do with children who needed extra assistance and had a much harder time achieving proficiency. All of these issues with implementation help to illustrate that without the state

guiding the policy it was difficult for school departments to find solutions to large issues. The state did not offer much assistance with these questions, so the solution to all of these differed depending on the school department one was looking at. With all of the challenges they faced, schools began to claim they did not have enough local control. Even the schools who first supported this policy agreed, and this led to Act being repealed.

Proficiency-based learning illustrates there is polarization with both geography and level of government control, and this creates a policy cycle that reproduces the status quo. This polarization between how much state control is acceptable and how much local control needs to remain makes finding a policy that is able to achieve creating equal education for all students is made even more difficult. This divide makes the legislature stuck in a constant stalemate rather than creating a policy to reform education. There is an inability to create a new policy, so the status quo is constantly reproduced. It can be seen, even when a policy is created that allows for large amounts of local control, school departments still complain about not having enough.

This creates a cycle of policy in Maine that ends with policy being repealed and leaving Maine without any comprehensive education policy. Each school ends up having nearly total control over the education their students are getting. Without policy that allows for an easy comparison of the quality of education students are getting between schools there is no way to ensure that all students are being taught at the level and rigor they should be. This allows for inequalities between school departments to widen.

4.2 Populism

This section will discuss how populism, and electing a populist governor, effects the creation of education policy in Maine. It is expected that Governor LePage used populist rhetoric to garner support for proficiency-based learning from his base. It is also expected that Governor

LePage will be able to effectively mobilize his base, generally rural lower income people, to support proficiency-based learning. This section will first establish what populism is and what kind of populist appeals are available to use. It will next compare Governor Walker of Wisconsin and Governor LePage. This will help in exemplifying that Governor LePage used similar populist rhetoric as Governor Walker did. Lastly, it will look at what kind of populist appeals Governor LePage used, and how this effected the adoption and implementation of proficiency-based learning. It is expected that the leadership style that Governor LePage used, due to this populist tendencies, created conflated and conflicting policy goals which created policy that was out of touch with Maine's needs and unsustainable.

4.2.1 How Populism is Mobilized

Cramer's and Hochschild's research have shown how feelings of isolation and neglect have increased among groups who perceive they are not getting their fair share. This has created an opportunity for populist leaders to mobilize supporters. The theorists Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris found populism thrives during times of insecurity, that being economic, military, or cultural. This insecurity encourages strong authoritarian xenophobic reactions (Inglehart & Norris, 2017, p. 443). This reaction is due to the fact people want "strong in-groups solidarity, rejection of outsiders, and rigid conformity to group norms" (Inglehart & Norris, 2017, p. 443). Our current climate, as Cramer and Hochschild found, has high levels of insecurity within our culture. People are feeling like they, who were considered and felt like majorities, are now minorities. In contrast, during times of security and peace people are more willing to think about new ideas and have higher toleration towards outgroups (Inglehart & Norris, 2017, p. 444). This happens in an intergenerational shift and allows for Postmaterialist values, which are "less conformist, more open to new ideas, less authoritarian, and more tolerant of outgroups", to

emerge (Inglehart & Norris, 2017, p. 444). This intergenerational shift occurred and allowed for populist movements to exploit the feelings and opinions of those who felt threatened by this shift to garner support. Those who feel threatened by this shift, particularly that it will erode traditional values, are generally less secure and of an older age (Inglehart & Norris, 2017, p. 443).

Support for populist leaders comes from cultural shifts, which is currently happening. As noted from Cramer's research there has been a shift in framing politics for rural people from economic issues to social issues. Populist leaders mobilize based upon cultural and immigration changes, and these come from postmaterialist and self-expression values rather than from economic factors (Inglehart & Norris, p. 446). The shift from focusing on economic issues to cultural issues goes hand in hand with the intergenerational shift towards postmaterialist. The postmaterialist shift changed how electorate organize. It is no longer along economic class dimension, but rather along self-expression or authoritarian values. Coinciding with this shift, there was an influx of immigration from low income countries who hold differing cultural values, which put people who aligned with traditional values on the defense (Inglehart & Norris, 2017, p. 447). This support is concentrated among certain groups: older generations, men, less-educated, religious and ethnic majorities, and those that hold traditional cultural values (Inglehart & Norris, 2017, p. 446). Cultural backlash to increases in immigration and the departure from traditional values, leads people to support populist leaders. Even further increasing economic insecurity increased the chance that someone would vote for this type of leader (Inglehart & Norris, 2017, p. 447). There is a combination of both cultural backlash and income insecurity in society right now, and this allows for greater opportunity and support for populist leaders. These conditions are observed to be happening in Maine. There has been declines in industries such as

milling, logging, and manufacturing (Which Industries are Growing in Maine?, n.d). These are all industries rural people relied more heavily on. This decline in industry is coupled with cultural backlash, particularly to the increase in immigration. In Maine 60.9% do not think that immigrants should be granted legal status. This belief is held by both urban and rural people. 59.5% of urban people do not think immigrants should be given legal status and 62.4% of the rural people believe this.

A second theorist Müller found that populism can only exist within a representative system, and it operates on the outer limits of democratic politics (Müller, 2016, p. 101). It requires representative systems to allow for its growth and adherence. With the election of Donald Trump in 2016, there has been an increase in conversation about populism, but the concept is nothing new. For the last thirty years populism has been rising in Europe. Populism according to Müller, separates society into two different groups: the people and the corrupt elites (Müller, 2016). Populism also argues that politics should be the expression of the people and the general will, rather than the elites (Müller, 2016).

Furthering this definition, there are two key characteristics to defining a populist movement. These characteristics are, a populist associates with the people and references to an “other” group, often elites (Müller, 2016). As this shows, democracy allows for populism based off its own definition. Democracy is the rule of the people, so inherently the general will of the people should be ruling the nation. Populism uses the basis of democracy to help further explain its intentions. This becomes problematic because rather than bridging the divide of the people it seeks to use a subset of the population and make them the group who owns the general will (Müller, 2016, p. 20). The populist leader identifies themselves with the people. Then they claim

can be the only one to truly represent the people, or rather the subset that has been given ownership of the general will (Müller, 2016, p. 22).

Populism is both anti-elitist and anti-pluralist (Müller, 2016,). It is anti-elitist because the people's general will should be what drives the government rather than the elites. Populism is anti-pluralist because when there is opposition to populist leaders and their opinions, their rival is always viewed and depicted as an immoral elite (Müller, 2016). Populist never recognize their opposition as legitimate (Müller, 2016). The opposition is always viewed as someone who does not represent or belong to the people (Müller, 2016). In addition, there are three specific features of populist governance. The first characteristic is they "attempt to hijack the state apparatus" (Müller, 2016, p. 4) The second is "corruption and 'mass clientelism'" (Müller, 2016, p. 4). The third is they are "always engaged in efforts to systematically suppress the civil society" (Müller, 2016, p. 4).

These three specific features of populism are not often observed in the United States. More commonly in the United States there will be candidate's with populist tendencies. These being anti-elitists, anti-pluralist, and having a moral framework. This moralistic conception of political means that the candidate argues without empirical evidence. The argument is also based on a truth that cannot be argued against (Müller, 2016, p. 39). These candidates do not feel the need to show that their actions are approved because it is assumed that the people who elected them into office are in constant agreement with them (Müller, 2016, p. 29). Populism is more than just being anti-elitist. It is anti-elitist coupled with anti-pluralism and a moralistic framework. This creates distinct rhetoric, most prominently the use of "us versus them" rhetoric.

4.2.2 *Populist Appeals: Comparison of Scott Walker and Paul LePage*

Both Governor Scott Walker and Governor Paul LePage utilized populist appeals to garner support and be elected into office. Governor Scott Walker and Governor Paul LePage both ran for election in 2010. The 2010 election was an off-year election but was in the height of the Tea Party wave (Woodard, 2014). They both utilized Tea Party platforms which helped to mobilize white conservatives and those who lived in rural areas. This group as Katherine Cramer and Arlie Hochschild found, feel overlooked and ignored by the government. They believe that the government is favoring those who are less deserving than they are. Even further, they prefer smaller government. They also, as Hochschild found, have more socially conservative views which they feel they are attacked and marginalized for (Hochschild, 2016). Both Scott Walker and Paul LePage used these feelings to their advantage and ran campaigns that target those who held these feelings.

Governor Walker and Governor LePage benefitted from the height of the Tea Party and Republican wave during their reelections. This Republican wave, which came from unease and unhappiness with the Obama Administration, helped to solidify second terms for both governors (Judis, 2019; Woodard, 2014). These governors' campaigns were after the recession of 2008. This was a period of high unemployment. This political landscape allowed for the election of a populist candidate to be more likely. As Inglehart and Norris found voters are more likely support populist leaders during periods of economic insecurity which the 2008 recession created. In addition, voters will support populist as a backlash to cultural changes. The election of Obama made people fear that traditional values and traditional leadership was being attacked which caused voters to feel defensive over their status.

The recession and high unemployment allowed these governors to craft narratives around who was getting what they actually deserved and who was unfairly benefitting. In addition, they both were able to blame past governors and the Obama Administration for these issues. This allowed them to represent a positive change. Both Governor Walker and LePage were able to blame the past governors, who represented the opposing party, for the high unemployment rates (Judis, 2019). Governor LePage additionally placed the blame on Augusta, the capital of Maine, as a whole (Russell, 2012). He claimed to be unlike the elite by using his unique upbringing and history in business as a way to distance himself from the typical politician. This is an example of how LePage was an anti-elitist. He blamed the ills of the state on the elites that held power in Augusta in the past.

These two governors both had similar backgrounds, campaign goals, and appeals. They both used their upbringing as a way to appeal to voters who were like them. Scott Walker emphasized that he was from a small town and this allowed him to understand rural people. He knew what circumstances they dealt with and how they felt the government was representing them (Cramer, 2016). Paul LePage had a unique upbringing, but it resonated with many rural voters in Maine. At a young age he ran away from his abusive father and was homeless for all of his teenage years. He went to college, got a high paying job in business, and ended up in politics (Dougherty, 2012). He was a prime example of the American Dream, and that hard work, not handouts, are rewarded with benefits. LePage often uses his history to distance himself from the stereotypical politician and focuses on this work within the business sector. Framing their upbringing in a way that resonates with voters allows for them to create an image that shows they truly represent the people's will and interests.

Both of these campaigns are rooted in populist appeals. The largest identifier that these governors use is creating an “other” group and refusing to acknowledge differing opinions as legitimate (Müller, 2016). Both of these candidates created an “other” group during their campaigns. They used this group to create “us versus them” language and appeals. This rhetoric is produced from both of these candidates having the three characteristics needed to be populist. Both of these governors gave rural people, who felt like they had been ignored, the control of general will during their campaign and while they served as governor. These governors determined the other group as the liberal urban elites. Governor LePage talked heavily about being against the Portland elites and the public sector (Gurley, 2016). Governor Walker determined the other group as the public sector and those who belonged to unions. This was done through his controversial proposition 10 which claimed would reduce this “other” group’s benefits and increasing the “people’s” fair share. Both of these examples show how both governors were anti-elitist. LePage harped on the benefits that the elites in Portland received and how the rest of the population was overlooked.

Scott Walker’s campaign goals were to increase jobs, reduce the cost of doing business, reduce taxes, increase skill training, and weaken unions (Rago, 2014). The most controversial action of his terms as governor was Proposition 10, which had the intent of weakening unions. Proposition 10 limited collective bargaining for public employees and it required them to pay more into their health care and pensions (Cramer, 2016). He made this appeal by tapping into the idea of who is deserving and who is not. In his appeal, these public employees were receiving benefits from these unions, but they were undeserving of them. By weakening these unions and requiring people to pay more into their benefits, it was bringing a sense of fairness to those who are hardworking but not able to be in these unions (Cramer, 2016). This rallied support from

rural people who felt like others who did not work as hard were getting unfair advantages. Scott Walker was able to mobilize this group by creating policy which took away perceived power from these public employees. Proposition 10 was created to help the people who felt ignored and overlooked to feel like their governor really wanted to create policy for them.

Paul LePage's campaign goals were to cut taxes, reduce environmental and labor regulation, limit welfare services, and cut public spending (Woodard, 2014). In addition, he was able to appeal to social conservatives with his views on abortion and same sex marriage. Governor LePage also attacked unions and wanted to weaken them. During his campaign he claimed that middle management state workers were corrupt, and unions protected them from being fired (Russell, 2012). He tapped into the same sense of deservingness that Scott Walker did by creating a narrative that public employees were unfairly protected in their jobs, a benefit that no rural person perceived themselves as getting. In addition to this, Paul LePage also created new restrictions on collective bargaining for the largest union in the state of Maine (Russell, 2012).

These attacks on unions, which are directed at state and public employees, ignite the root feelings of rural consciousness that Cramer lays out. These rural people believe that they are being overlooked by the government in favor of those who do not work as hard as them (Cramer, 2016). Both Scott Walker and Paul LePage show they are paying attention to the rural people by creating and attacking these public employees. These public employees are perceived by rural people as being paid more, having more benefits, and not having to work as hard to achieve their success. Both governors show that they want to redirect attention to the rural people and allow for their needs and preferences to be represented in government. This mobilized support from these groups.

They also both utilize populist appeals. They are focused on giving the people their fair share. Not all the people are included in this, just the subset that has been deemed the people by both governors. The union workers are not a part of this subset. Their preferences and opinions are neglected and deemed as illegitimate. Even when large numbers of people protested proposition 10 Governor Scott Walker did nothing to modify the proposition (Cramer, 2016). He kept on representing the subset he had created as “the people”. These union members are able to use collective bargaining and received protections from these unions, but as both governors weakening unions they are removing these from union members. They were weakening these so they could further the goals of “the people”.

Another key part of their campaign goals was cutting taxes. This is another goal that taps into rural consciousness. These rural people believe that too much of their money is being taken from them and given to urban areas (Cramer, 2016). They often believe the government is poorly handling their tax money which creates distrust and a stronger preference for small government. Paul LePage taps into this sentiment by stating during his campaign that in Augusta there has been “fiscal mismanagement” by the past governor and legislature (Long, 2013). Scott Walker also campaigned for a tax cut. This platform not only aligns with the Republican party’s platform, but even further energizes those who see tax money as being redistributed into urban areas and out of small communities who deserve it.

Another appeal that Paul LePage used was attacking welfare. He grew up homeless but was able to go to school and get a job, and he was able to use this to his advantage when advocating against welfare. His goals were to slash TANF, add work requirements to the food voucher program, and increase welfare abuse investigations (Melchior, 2014). He spoke about people living off of handouts and not putting in any work to receive these benefits. Again, this

resonated with people from rural parts of Maine who are struggling to make ends meet, but rather than enrolling or relying on welfare programs have two or three jobs. These people felt noticed and understood when Paul LePage wanted to reign in and limit the amount of welfare.

This part of Governor Paul Lepage's campaign had a heightened populist tone. He was careful to distinguishing between hard working low-income rural people and low-income people who he believed to live off of welfare. He made separate groups and vested the general will of the people in the rural hardworking group. He campaigned on the basis that if he was elected into office, he would cut welfare. In addition, he would increase the amount of welfare investigations to put an end to welfare fraud (Melchior, 2014). The people who are receiving welfare are not thought about because they are not in the "people".

Both of these governors used similar appeals when enacting education policy. Scott Walker claimed to be an education governor when he was running for this third term. Many voters contested this because his education policy was not the stereotypical pro-education policy. He cut millions of dollars in funding for public schools, weakened teacher unions, expanded voucher programs for private and religious schools, and focused on workforce training (Strauss, 2018). He did eventually increase funding for public school, but the funding never returned to the level it was before he was in office (Strauss, 2018).

These may not on the surface seem like they are pro-education policy, but how he framed these policy choices appealed to "the people". Weakening unions, as stated above, was done through Proposition 10 which effected teacher unions. Rather than focus on how Wisconsin was losing teachers at a rapid rate and unable to provide competitive pay due to the weakening of the unions, he focused on the flexibility and control that schools now had (Strauss, 2018). He framed this as giving districts increased control over their staff and how to manage their budget (Strauss,

2018). Schools were able to hire and keep staff based off of merit and pay them based on performance. He claimed will help improve the quality of education in Wisconsin (Strauss, 2018). This narrative resonates with people who want smaller government because it removes the states influence on local education policy. It also ensures that teachers are paid what they deserve based off of their success. He advocated that he was picking policy that was pro-student rather than pro-educator. His expansion of vouchers allows for students to have more ease to pick where they go to school. He argues that by raising accountability standards for teachers', students will be getting a higher quality education.

Governor LePage used a similar narrative of being pro-student. He attached expanding school choice and creating charter schools with the policy trend of accountability. He also focused on highlighting how this policy would allow for the state to have more control over education standards rather than the federal government. This speaks to those who want smaller government. The state government be able to create the education standards, but the local school districts were able to choose which standards each student would need to master in order to graduate. This was framed to make rural people to feel like policy would be reflective of their preferences.

Governor LePage was a populist governor with conservative ideology. Time and time again he blamed the ills of state on the elites in Augusta and Portland. He often blamed the politicians for not taking action and stalling on the creation of beneficial policy (Dougherty, 2012). In addition to this, he delegitimized his opposition. When legislators spoke out about him or voted against his policy proposal, he would send them handwritten letters calling them liars or hypocritical (Dougherty, 2012). He also would create wanted posters with the face of people in opposition to him to hang up at town halls and in his office (Sharp, 2016). Also, he would have

critics escorted out of town halls. He would never interact with the opposition in a meaningful way rather he was dismissive towards them and would use hostile rhetoric and delegitimize them.

Lastly, when justifying his actions or positions, he would use anecdotes or falsified information. He would never tell people the sources of his information (Dougherty, 2012). In addition, he would not look for support within his constituency but rather assumed he had it. This can be seen with the case study of proficiency-based learning. This policy was never brought to communities to gauge the level of support. LePage stated their support, even though he did not have it, because of his moralistic framework. By displaying these characteristics it can be seen that Governor LePage did have populist tendencies. Acting on these populist impulses and trying to govern created conflicting and conflating goals for his policy choice. These goals made the successful implementation unfeasible.

4.2.3 Populist Appeals: Pertaining to Proficiency-Based Learning

Governor LePage supported the proficiency-based learning policy that the Maine Department of Education proposed in coordination with businesses in Augusta. As a governor he had populist tendencies, but when he came into office, he made decisions with a conservative ideology through populist rhetoric. He continued to not show that communities were in support for what he was arguing for. In addition, he painted the opposition as villains. These villains ranged from the teachers, to administration, to the elites. He attempted to frame this policy option in a way that would appeal to his constituency but was not able to convince them to vote yes. He focused on making five appeals that primarily tapped into the anti-government, anti-union, and undeserving sentiments that the rural population has. Throughout these claims it can be seen that the policy goals become conflated and conflicting these created challenges in the

policy implementation. This confirms my research proposition that LePage's form of governing created policy that was out of touch with communities and unsustainable.

The first appeal that Governor LePage used was framing this policy as a way to increase choice. He linked proficiency-based learning to creating charter schools in Maine. The state of Maine had no charter schools before 2012, when this policy was proposed. Once the Act was passed the creation of the first charter school began. In his first statements about proficiency-based learning he said, it is important “[to allow] families rather than their street addresses [to have] more say in determining where students attend school” (Maine Department of Education n.da). In addition to allowing for choice on where to enroll in school, he also framed this as choice in how to participate in school. He acknowledged that not all students learn and produce work in the same way, and proficiency-based learning addresses this. While talking about proficiency-based learning he said, “options must be available to students and parents. In other words, they need choice. Giving students more learning options and the ability to determine what school is best suited for them will enhance every student's public education” (LePage, 2013a). This is a feature of proficiency-based learning that allows students to choose to write a paper, do a project, take a test, or make a portfolio to show their mastery of a skill.

This appeal of choice is what he used to try and mobilize rural people to support proficiency-based learning. As Cramer explains in her book, being rural and identifying with the Republican party is not a coincidence (Cramer, 2016). The Republican party advocates for increased school choice as an education policy solution. In Maine this was not realized to its full potential, the state had no charter schools and had a limited number of private schools. This Act would allow for parents to have a say in where their child goes to school. This gives parents more control and limits the ways in which the government is influencing and encroaching on

personal decisions. This aligns with Governor LePage's rhetoric on being anti-government. During his campaign he vowed to support smaller government (Woodard, 2014). By allowing for the people, or the subset that he has given ownership over the general will, to make their own choices about their child's education, that limits the state government's influence.

The second appeal was holding teachers accountable and ensuring education is student based. Proficiency-based learning is just another way to hold teachers accountable, and ensure they are teaching students at the highest level and producing the results that are expected of them. Maine was seeing little to no change in achievement scores by implemented No Child Left Behind. This made people perceive teachers as not producing the level of achievement in their students that is expected of them. Proficiency-based learning was a new way to evaluate this. After Maine was reported to creating lower levels of improvement in achievement than other surrounding states, Governor LePage said, "we need to steal [other state's best] practices, especially by focusing on effective teachers, rigorous standards, and more choice for students and families" (Groening, 2012). He furthers this argument, with "accountability, best practices, and [having] multiple options [for students] will help Maine students excel" (LePage, 2013a). He then explains that Maine needs to create a new system of accountability in order to improve achievement. This system will "[measure] school performance and [provide] assistance to struggling school" (LePage, 2013a).

This was a positive way to frame proficiency-based learning for rural people because it aligns with the belief that teachers need to be held accountable. During Governor LePage's campaign he tapped into the rhetoric that teacher union members are protected from being fired and have limited checks on them. He also claimed the teacher unions were unwilling to support statewide contracts which would increase pay (LePage, 2017). Cramer's findings support this,

rural people perceive union workers as being protected during financial hardships, like the recession, and get more than their fair share. He framed teachers as being a part of the “other” group, and they were elites who were receiving economic security that the general people were not. Accountability on the surface is not populist, but by blaming the teachers for the lack of progress and isolating them as a villain he used populist rhetoric to frame accountability.

The third appeal was proficiency-based learning created a more student focused academic environment. Proficiency-based learning tracked student achievement by comparing how many skills and what kinds of skills they have become proficient in over the last year. This data can be compared to the same data they had on that student last year. This form of progression created more personalized tracking. It created higher insurance that each child is achieving at the same or higher level than they did the year before. Even further than this, students will be getting more one on one time. Students who may have been overlooked, lumped in the middle, or have slipped through the cracks, will now get more personal attention from their teachers. Teachers do not give class lectures. Instead they meet with each student individually through the class period or put them into small groups (Barshay, 2018). This allows for each student to get more attention from their teachers in ways that the traditional education system does not allow for.

This taps into rural people not feeling like they get their fair share. While advocating for proficiency-based learning Governor LePage said, “currently there are winners and losers in Maine’s education system. Union bosses and administrators enjoy many benefits and protections while teachers and students have been displaced” (LePage, 2013a). This new education system changes the culture to be a student-based education system where students own and control their progress and how work gets done. Teachers are there to help facilitate and guide the process. In addition to this, each school now has to have students graduating with proficiency in the same

eight content areas. In theory, this would ensure that all students are graduating with the same level of mastery in all of the same areas. This would mean that urban schools and rural schools would be producing equally prepared students for the future. Rural people feel like they are being overlooked. Governor LePage framed it to show each student would be getting more attention from the teachers, and students across the state would be getting an equal education.

The fourth appeal frames proficiency-based learning as a way to reform school funding. This policy proposal did not begin by creating any changes to school funding. Before the final vote it allowed for the Department of Education to give each school one percent of their school administrative unit. Even though the policy has little to no effect on the funding formula, he still frames this policy as a way for the budget to be redirected. Governor LePage appeals to the people by saying that too much money has been going into the hands of the administrators and teacher unions and not enough is going into the classrooms. In Governor LePage's State of the State address he said, "We [Maine] spend more than twice the national average on administrative overhead in our schools. In fact, on per-pupil basis, Maine has the highest district administration costs in the nation. This money should be going into the classroom, not funding more bureaucrats with questionable impact on our children's education" (LePage, 2013b).

This policy would ensure that more money was going into the classrooms and that students would be benefiting from the school budget rather than the teachers and administrators. In Maine, over half of each school's budget comes from local property taxes (Educate Maine, 2015, p. 4). Rural people, as stated above, often perceive themselves as getting less tax dollar redirected to their community (Cramer, 2016). Governor LePage was able to use this policy as a way to redirect the perception of tax money. He framed it as going back into the rural people's children and families, rather than the teacher unions and the administration. He taps into his

rhetoric that Augusta has been “mismanaging the finances” and “corrupt middle management and unions” are gaining while the people are losing (Russell, 2012). He wants to move money away from the corrupt unions and into the classroom to help benefit the students.

The fifth appeal was mostly driven by Governor LePage’s Commissioner of Education. This appeal was that the federal government was trying to create education policy and solutions, but they were not working for Maine. The state needed a solution created by Mainers for Mainers. Even further than this, each district and school was tasked with creating what skills students need to be proficient in under the eight content areas (Stump & Silvernail, 2014, p. 26). Governor LePage tapped into the wants that rural people have of smaller government. This policy would first allow for the federal government to have little control over what kind of education policy was implemented. This creates a perception that people similar to rural people in Maine’s state government will be creating a policy that will work for them. Governor LePage framed himself as one of the people, so he would be able to best represent their wants and needs in this policy choice. It also limited state control. The state government only created the skeleton of the policy and local schools had to create the meat of this policy. Local districts were able to decide what skills fall under what content area and what skills are important enough that they need to be mastered before graduating. This removed state control and vested control it in local government and people.

These appeals are able to show that Governor LePage had many differing goals for this policy. One of his policy goals was to further market-based education reform. Another goal was to hold teachers accountable and increase achievement scores by creating a new proficiency-based system. In addition, he wanted to remove control teachers and administration had over education. These goals were not compatible and created policy that was unsustainable and

unfavorable within communities across Maine. This disconnect can be seen through the roll call votes where rural legislators, who he appealed to, vote to oppose the Act.

As the figure 4.1.5 shows, of the legislators that voted yes 42.5% were from rural counties compared to the 57.5% from nonrural counties. This same pattern can be seen when looking at who voted no. Out of legislators that voted no 55.4% were from rural counties and 44.6% were from nonrural counties. This shows that in general there were higher levels of acceptance for the bill as a whole compared to opposition, but overall rural counties were opposed at a higher level than those from nonrural counties.

There are several reasons that rural communities, even after the appeals Governor LePage made, opposed this bill. One of the reasons is that this began as an unfunded mandate. Cramer found people with a rural identity often feel the government is pushing mandates onto them that will not help their community (Cramer, 2016). The rural legislators were able to understand how this would financially burden their school. They perceived this as not burdening wealthier communities located in urban areas. This reproduced the perception that rural communities are being overlooked and neglected when policy is created.

In addition, this was a top down policy. There was no communication with the communities before this was voted on. The people who created this policy were businesses in Augusta. This was not a policy that was first created by the Education Committee, or was a policy the communities were able to have a say in. The nature of this being a top down policy overshadowed all of the appeals Governor LePage made to rural people. Lastly, this policy was creating statewide content areas and standards. This removed local control and allowed for the state to have more input on education. The rural communities saw this as the state intervening to fix a problem they did not understand. The rural communities knew the elites in Augusta did not

understand the challenges that occur in every school, so they believed local government not the state should create the solution. Local control allows for the school departments to create policy that address the challenges their schools face. Even with all of the appeals to rural communities by Governor LePage, the economic burden and the top down nature of the policy overshadowed these and led to more rural legislators vote no.

The rural legislators were able to correctly see the burdens and flaws within the policy, but it still was able to pass. Governor LePage fast tracked this policy and used his populist rhetoric to reframe and advocate for it. This policy may have still been pushed to be proposed without Governor LePage, but his leadership pushed this policy into practice too quickly and with conflicting goals which made it unsustainable. The policy was not fully developed when it was passed. There was not a detailed implementation plan, there was no coordination with the local communities, and there was not general support for it by the citizen of Maine. Even with all of this, Governor LePage pushed it through to accomplish the goal of market-based reform. The lack of preparation that went into this Act caught up with it and led to making proficiency-based diplomas optional, and then repealing proficiency-based learning in this entirety.

| Figure 4.2.1 Rural Versus Nonrural House of Representatives Vote on The Act to Ensure the Successful Implementation of Proficiency-based Diplomas by Extending the Timeline for Phasing in Their Implementation | | | |
|--|-------------|-----------|------------|
| | Yay | Nay | Overall |
| Nonrural County | 66 (57%) | 3 (42.9%) | 69 (56.1%) |
| Rural County | 50 (43%) | 4 (57.1%) | 54 (43.9%) |
| Total | 116 (94.3%) | 7 (5.7%) | 123 (100%) |

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Figure 4.2.1 shows the vote of approval for making this policy optional was not divided by geographical lines. This Act had support from 94.3% of the legislators in the House of Representatives. Only 5.7% of the legislators opposed this. This Act was also approved in the Senate. This figure shows that all communities were negatively impacted by this policy and wanted to create a way for school to opt out of this. The next year the legislature repealed proficiency-based learning in its entirety. There were no roll call votes on this because it was voted yes under the hammer in both chambers. This means that “approval is presumed unless an objection is raised before the presiding officer bangs the gavel” (Clerk of House and Secretary of the Senate, n.d). By 2019 there was overwhelming support to repeal proficiency-based learning in its entirety.

The statewide support to repeal proficiency-based diplomas was due to the challenges school departments faced when implement proficiency-based diplomas and the opposition to state control over education. When school departments had questions, there was no response from the state in order to ensure that there was low state intervention within the policy. This establishment of local control made it difficult for this policy to ever have a chance of being fully implemented. Most communities cited not having enough resources to implement this policy. They also noted confusion over what encompasses proficiency, and how to mitigate the negative effects this policy would have on already disadvantaged groups (Stump & Silvernail, 2014).

Proficiency-based learning was only required for six years and was repealed after seven. This policy was adopted by Governor LePage in order to capitalize on the school choice movement. His populist tendencies made him unconcerned with if communities supported this due to the nature that populist leaders presume their supporters agree with them. In addition, his support and endorsement of this policy was not thought through. There was no plan for

implementation or preparation given to the school departments, but he continued to support it for the political purpose. This created a policy that unsustainable in all types of communities in Maine. Using this policy as a political tool created conflicting and conflated policy goals and led to six years of patchy policy and untraceable educational results. This confirms by research proposition that Governor LePage's adopted policy that was out of touch and unsustainable.

4.3 Budgetary Constraints on Education Funding

This section looks at the effects that the education budget has on policy. It is important to look at school budgets because they determine what type of resources and opportunities can be provided in a school department. In schools where budgets are low, there is less money to pay higher teacher salaries, to provide diverse course offerings, and to fund other resources that create a higher quality of education (Silvernail & Linet, 2014, p. 2). In addition, when high variation between school budgets exists, there is then high inequality in the education students receive. By not having funding formulas that consider the specific needs of lower income schools, then education inequality is exacerbated rather than mitigated. When looking at how the budget affects education one needs to look at how much emphasis within the state budget education is given, the funding formula, and the variation in budgets across the state. It is expected that when the budget is small and there is high reliance on local funding, then more education inequality will be present. If there was high reliance on local contribution, then this will breed higher levels of variation between district budgets. This section will look at how the creation of the education budget and its level of variation impacts education policy in Maine.

Proficiency-based learning, the policy being used as the case study, helps to illustrate how the budget and lack of resources in a community effects the adoption and implementation of education policy in Maine. Rural communities perceived proficiency-based learning as placing a

larger burden on their schools. This is due to the increase in subjects required to be taught and the increased amount of work teachers needed to do to create new curriculums. These communities knew that they did not have the resources within the schools to meet the minimum requirements. This led rural legislators to vote against this policy in higher percentages. In addition, this policy could never be fully implemented because schools did not have the budget or resources they needed. This demand of more resources from this policy, but not having these subsidized, helps to further explain how quality education policy is difficult to create and implement in Maine.

4.3.1 National Overview

In the United States on average \$12,854.88 spent on per pupil expenditures. A per pupil expenditure is how much money is being allocated to a school's budget based upon how many students attend the school. The highest spending state, according to the Stanford Education Data File, is Alaska which spends \$28,073.24 on total per pupil expenditures. The lowest spending state is Tennessee which spends \$8,770.22 on total per pupil expenditures. The figure below displays how much on average every state spends and notes the national average.

| Figure 4.3.1: Total Per Pupil Expenditures of Each State from Highest to Lowest | | |
|--|--|---------------------------|
| State | Average Total Per Pupil Expenditure | Standard Deviation |
| Alaska | \$28,073.24 | 11,210.88 |
| District of Columbia | \$24,496.11 | 2,929.24 |
| Wyoming | \$22,171.00 | 6,699.92 |
| New York | \$21,531.52 | 5,164.05 |
| New Jersey | \$18,883.45 | 4,251.09 |
| Connecticut | \$18,287.08 | 3,668.14 |
| Vermont | \$17,491.05 | 3,893.85 |
| New Hampshire | \$16,770.49 | 4,065.01 |

| | | |
|--------------------------|-------------|----------|
| Rohde Island | \$16,768.54 | 3,186.25 |
| Massachusetts | \$16,051.53 | 3,658.80 |
| Delaware | \$15,005.74 | 2,988.70 |
| Maryland | \$14,923.08 | 1,576.39 |
| North Dakota | \$14,768.00 | 4,252.38 |
| Maine | \$14,720.79 | 3,404.72 |
| Pennsylvania | \$14,680.12 | 2,872.19 |
| Nebraska | \$14,383.97 | 3,285.32 |
| New Mexico | \$14,274.63 | 4,413.44 |
| Nevada | \$13,219.29 | 4,497.95 |
| Wisconsin | \$12,896.31 | 2,073.43 |
| United States Average | \$12,854.88 | 4,667.11 |
| Montana | \$12,835.20 | 4,978.95 |
| Hawaii | \$12,797.43 | 360.39 |
| Minnesota | \$12,371.25 | 2,465.07 |
| Washington | \$12,297.51 | 4,062.88 |
| West Virginia | \$12,247.22 | 1,452.81 |
| Kansas | \$12,094.23 | 2,287.87 |
| Illinois | \$12,057.37 | 2,996.01 |
| Louisiana | \$12,052.64 | 2,620.47 |
| Oregon | \$11,917.03 | 3,821.73 |
| Texas | \$11,810.06 | 3,522.02 |
| Iowa | \$11,763.02 | 2,076.53 |
| Colorado | \$11,722.65 | 3,646.74 |
| Ohio | \$11,609.85 | 2,810.01 |
| Virginia | \$11,456.32 | 2,029.53 |
| South Carolina | \$11,235.89 | 2,308.53 |
| California | \$11,048.29 | 4,544.58 |
| South Dakota | \$10,856.98 | 2,719.56 |
| Arkansas | \$10,751.78 | 2,036.10 |
| Michigan | \$10,639.03 | 1,935.41 |
| Georgia | \$10,564.65 | 1,849.32 |
| Kentucky | \$10,556.47 | 1,615.55 |
| Indiana | \$10,534.82 | 2,422.67 |
| Missouri | \$10,429.02 | 2,326.42 |
| Alabama | \$10,092.23 | 1,594.21 |
| Florida | \$10,063.63 | 1,315.81 |
| North Carolina | \$9,809.03 | 1,397.48 |
| Arizona | \$9,681.34 | 3,369.73 |
| Utah | \$9,495.75 | 2,727.96 |
| Mississippi | \$9,270.08 | 1,594.54 |
| Oklahoma | \$9,021.45 | 1,778.14 |

| | | |
|-----------|------------|----------|
| Idaho | \$8,913.96 | 2,877.15 |
| Tennessee | \$8,770.22 | 1,165.10 |

Sanford Education Data File

Figure 4.3.1 displays four state, Alaska, District of Columbia, Wyoming, and New York, spend over \$20,000. This shows there is a cluster of four states which are spending significantly more than the rest. After this cluster, there is a gradual decrease in what each state spends. This gradual decrease concentrates more states under the national average. There are 32 states that spend less than the national average whereas there are only 19 states that spend more than the national average.

This displays the high variation of per pupil expenditures between each state. There is a \$20,000 difference between the highest and lowest spending states. Not only is there high variation between the highest and lowest spending states, but also between the average spending states. There are many states that spend \$12,000 and under, but there are also many states that spend \$14,000 and over. These differences in per pupil expenditures are affected by the cost of living in each state. Increasing in the cost of living leads to high per pupil expenditures. Also, if property taxes are higher in a state there is more revenue able to be directed towards per pupil expenditures. In addition, the difference between the geographic make up of a state, urban or rural, will have an effect on per pupil expenditures. States with large school districts in rural areas will have higher per pupil expenditures due to higher cost of operation for these schools. Rural schools cost more to operate due to high transportation cost, and other specific needs these schools have (Silvernail & Linet, 2014, p. 4).

Within these states there is also variation among districts. This variation is driven by similar factors as variation between states. Variables such as cost of living, overall wealth of an area, property taxes, and the location of a school create variation. The variation that exists within

states is represented by the standard deviation listed in figure 4.3.1. This variation reflects the influence of property tax revenues across districts within states. When the standard deviation is smaller, than it is expected that school districts' budgets are similar to one another, but as the standard deviation is larger it is expected that there are higher levels of variation between school districts' budgets. The standard deviation demonstrates that two-thirds of the school districts in Maine spend between \$11,298 and \$18,125 per pupil.

4.3.2 Budget in Maine

Nationally, Maine ranks 14th for per pupil expenditures which places it in the upper average tier. Even though Maine is ranked above average in the United States for per pupil expenditures, they are still spending half as much as Alaska, the highest-ranking state. In addition, there are still high levels of variation among school departments within Maine. As shown in figure 4.3.1 there is over a \$7,000 range between two thirds of the school districts. This variation comes from how the overall per pupil expenditure is funded. To illustrate how the per pupil expenditure is funded, the Maine's 2016 per pupil expenditure of \$13,278 will be broken down. Of this \$13,278, \$1,033 comes from federal revenue. Maine places 33rd in receiving funding from the federal government. Another \$5,974 comes from state revenue which places Maine 28th in receiving funding from state revenue. The last \$8,385 comes from local revenue, this places Maine 10th for receiving local revenue to fund education (U.S Census Bureau, 2016). This shows that on average Maine's education funding relies heavier on local contribution, and this reliance allows for variation of per pupil expenditures between school departments. Due to this local reliance, local economic conditions can strongly influence spending and local contribution to the budget. This is better illustrated through looking at the formula the state of Maine uses to fund education.

In the state of Maine, education funding is calculated through the Essential Programs and Services Funding Act, referred to as EPS. This funding model was first proposed in 1999 and was officially implemented in 2006 (Silvernail, 2011, p. 23). The goal of this funding formula was to move to an adequacy-based funding system (Silvernail, 2011, p. 1). In order to determine the amount of funding a school gets, the state created six services every school would need to provide to ensure students were receiving a quality education. These are the minimum standards the state requires and will assist in funding. If a school department wants to enhance these services, they can by locally voting to enlarge the proportion of property taxes going towards the budget. These services are School Personnel, Supplies and Equipment, Resources for Specialized Student Populations, Specialized Services, District Services, and School Level Adjustment (Silvernail, 2011, p. 6).

The EPS formula determines how much it costs for each school to provide these six services at the minimum standard. Once it is determined how much it will cost to provide each school these services, the regional adjustment is either added or subtracted. This is then divided by the number of pupils enrolled and creates the per pupil expenditure (Maine Department of Education, n.db). Lastly, to determine how much the local and state government are responsible for, the formula takes into consideration the valuation of the town and subtracts this from what the state is contributing (Maine Department of Education, n.db). This means that a wealthier town will receive less state funding because the local valuation is higher, and they are able to generate higher revenue through property tax to put towards the budget. Therefore, the wealthy communities are still able to spend more on per pupil expenditures even though their state allocation is lower than more disadvantaged district.

In 2004 the state passed a referendum that required the state to fund 55% of education in Maine (Educate Maine, 2015, p. 3). This 55% has still not been reached, and currently the state is funding 52% of education (Ohm, 2020). This referendum required the state to make up 55% of the entire education budget, but the state can decide how this 55% is distributed. This distributed through the EPS formula. This funding percentage and funding formula aligns with how other states fund their public education systems. This variation is not abnormal, but it does provide real consequences to the quality and academic achievement in school districts.

The Picus Report is an independent review of Maine's Essential Programs and Service Funding Act. This report was given and presented to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. The Picus report found, wealthier communities in the state of Maine are able to raise more revenue to put into school budgets through their already higher property taxes (Picus et al., 2013, p. 47). This is where the inequality in funding comes from in the state of Maine. National rankings place Maine 42nd for receiving funds from the state to put into education compared to ranking 8th in receiving local revenue (National Education Association, 2019, pp. 32-33). This illustrates that there is a high reliance on local revenue in Maine, and that allows for high variation to occur between budgets. In addition to this, Maine ranks very low on how much of the state budget is going into education. Only 29% of the general expenditure budget, which makes up 44% of the overall budget, is going into education (Maine Development Foundation for Policy Leaders Academy. 2019. p. 10). This places Maine in 46th for percentage of general expenditures going to education (National Education Assessment, 2017).

Due to the reliance on local funding, it is not surprising that the districts that are wealthier are able to create supplemental funding to increase their school budget. The EPS formula expects the wealthier towns to provide enough funding to meet minimum standards. Most wealthy towns

go even further and increase the amount they are contributing to go beyond the minimum standards. An example is, many of these wealthier towns want to fund smaller student to teacher ratios than the state provides for, so they allocate more than the expected contribution to their school budget. As these figures show there are differences in poverty levels and median income between the 16 counties in Maine. These differences can be seen to map on to the urban-rural divide. These differences help to explain how there can be high variation between school budgets.

| Figure 4.3.2: Percent of People Below Poverty Level Broken Down by County | | |
|--|--------------------|----------------|
| County Classification | County Name | Percent |
| Urban | Androscoggin | 12.9% |
| Urban | Cumberland | 10.7% |
| Urban | Penobscot | 15.9% |
| Urban | York | 8.5% |
| Urban Average | | 12% |
| Rural | Aroostook | 14.3% |
| Rural | Franklin | 12.4% |
| Rural | Hancock | 11.6% |
| Rural | Kennebec | 14.1% |
| Rural | Knox | 11.6% |
| Rural | Lincoln | 11.8% |
| Rural | Oxford | 15.2% |
| Rural | Piscataquis | 18.7% |
| Rural | Sagadahoc | 11.3% |
| Rural | Somerset | 17.8% |
| Rural | Waldo | 14.3% |
| Rural | Washington | 18.2% |
| Rural Average | | 14.28% |

American Community Survey 2013-2017

| Figure 4.3.3: Percent of People 18 and Under Below Poverty Level Broken Down by County | | |
|---|--------------------|----------------|
| County Classification | County Name | Percent |
| Urban | Androscoggin | 19.1% |

| | | |
|---------------|-------------|--------|
| Urban | Cumberland | 12.3% |
| Urban | Penobscot | 18.4% |
| Urban | York | 9.3% |
| Urban Average | | 14.78% |
| Rural | Aroostook | 21.8% |
| Rural | Franklin | 12.6% |
| Rural | Hancock | 14.2% |
| Rural | Kennebec | 19.5% |
| Rural | Knox | 14.0% |
| Rural | Lincoln | 14.6% |
| Rural | Oxford | 21.5% |
| Rural | Piscataquis | 24.9% |
| Rural | Sagadahoc | 18.9% |
| Rural | Somerset | 17.8% |
| Rural | Waldo | 18.2% |
| Rural | Washington | 22.6% |
| Rural Average | | 19.03% |

American Community Survey 2013-2017

| Figure 4.3.4: Median Household Income Broken Down by County | | |
|--|--------------------|----------------|
| County Classification | County Name | Percent |
| Urban | Androscoggin | \$49,538 |
| Urban | Cumberland | \$65,702 |
| Urban | Penobscot | \$47,886 |
| Urban | York | \$62,618 |
| Urban Average | | \$56,436 |
| Rural | Aroostook | \$39,021 |
| Rural | Franklin | \$45,541 |
| Rural | Hancock | \$51,438 |
| Rural | Kennebec | \$50,116 |
| Rural | Knox | \$53,117 |
| Rural | Lincoln | \$54,041 |
| Rural | Oxford | \$44,582 |
| Rural | Piscataquis | \$38,797 |
| Rural | Sagadahoc | \$60,457 |
| Rural | Somerset | \$41,549 |
| Rural | Waldo | \$50,162 |
| Rural | Washington | \$40,328 |
| Rural Average | | \$47,429 |

American Community Survey 2013-2017

These figures show that there are economic differences that persist in Maine. It can be seen that rural communities have higher levels of poverty. Figure 4.3.2 shows on average 14.28% of rural people live in poverty compared to 12% of urban people. Figure 4.3.3 shows this gap is even larger when only looking at children who live in poverty. On average, 14.78% of urban children live in poverty compared to 19.03% of rural children. In addition, figure 4.3.4 demonstrates there is a \$9,007 difference between urban and rural median household incomes.

By comparing the difference between a school department in a wealthy community and a school department in poor community, the impacts of the funding formula and communities' economic conditions can be observed. Cape Elizabeth, a wealthy town, has a total allocation of \$17,487,995.02. Of this total allocation, \$15,834,396.00 is coming from local contribution and \$1,653,599.02 is coming from state contribution. The state is only funding 9.46% of the budget (Maine Department of Education, 2019). In Lewiston, a high poverty town, the total allocation is \$77,812,144.83. Of this allocation, \$18,426,036.00 is coming from local contribution and \$59,386,108.83 is coming from state contribution. The state is funding 76.32% of the budget (Maine Department of Education, 2019).

This illustrates how the amount of funding coming from state and local sources in each school department differs depending on the economic circumstances of the district. The variation in economic conditions illustrated in figures 4.3.2 to 4.3.4 show the budget is susceptible to variation based upon the economic condition in their district. Using the same comparison as above, Cape Elizabeth has a per pupil expenditure of \$14,657.21 whereas Lewiston has a per pupil expenditure of \$11,289.33 (Maine Department of Education, 2018). This shows that even though Lewiston is getting more state funding, Cape Elizabeth is still able to spend more money on per pupil expenditures by raising their local contribution higher than what the state expects

them to contribute. The variation that the funding formula attempts to mitigate still persists due to the ability of wealthier communities to increase their supplemental funding. This shows that creating equal education across the state is made increasingly difficult due to the variation in economic conditions.

4.3.3 *Other Economic Effects*

The funding formula for per pupil expenditures allows for variation to occur between school departments in Maine. These per pupil expenditures contribute to the issue of inequality in education, but they are not the only factor. The social and economic conditions of a community reinforce one another and create larger barriers to high achievement within schools if there is no policy to address these conditions. When there are more people in a community living in low income households then there is a higher chance that the students will have greater needs. These greater needs will make these students actually need higher than average per pupil expenditures to be receiving equal opportunity in their education. This is unable to be achieved because they live in a community where they cannot increase these expenditures to match the communities with higher income and less needy children.

By using the Stanford Education Data File, I was able to estimate the impact the breadth and depth of poverty in Maine school districts has on educational achievement.

| Figure 4.3.5: Model of School Budget and Social Conditions on Maine's Achievement Scores | |
|---|---------------------------|
| Student Teacher Ratio | -.0093** (.001) |
| Total Per Pupil Expenditures | -5.61e-06** (1.17e-06) |
| Per Pupil Expenditures for Instruction | .0000** (2.85e-06) |
| Percent of Students on Free or Reduced Lunch | -.7288** (.0176) |

| | |
|-----------------|---------------------|
| Rural | -.0509** (.0064) |
| Constant | .3652** (.0352) |
| R-square | .2024 |
| N | 8,110 |

*p < 0.05

**p < 0.01

Figure 4.3.5 shows that the social and economic conditions have a large and more significant impact on achievement compared to the school budget. It can be observed when there is a 1% increase in students who receive free or reduced lunch there is one-point decrease in achievement scores. In addition to percent of students on free or reduced lunch having a significant impact, the type of community a student lives in also has a large impact on achievement scores. If a student is living in a rural community, their achievement scores are five-points lower than students who live in an urban area. Lastly, the results pertaining to school budget and factors within the school all had minimal effects. Student teacher ratios, total per pupil expenditures, and per pupil expenditures, specifically put towards instruction, all were statistically significant and had the expected effect on achievement scores. The coefficients on all of these were very small and showed minimal impact compared to the social and economic conditions of the community a student's lives in and the location of this community.

What this model is not able to capture is how the economic and social conditions in a community effect the school budget, and how the school budget effects the economic and social conditions. These two concepts work together rather than working individually. When there are low social and economic conditions in a community there are not supplemental funds that are able to be put into the school budget. It then is hard to attract and retain high quality teachers (Silvernail & Linet, 2014, p. 2). In addition, when the social and economic conditions are low there are fewer resources being put into the schools (Silvernail & Linet, 2014, p. 4). When there

is a smaller school budget and fewer resources being put into schools, students are often not receiving as rigorous of an education. They also are not offered as wide of a course selection, and do not have the proper guidance on what to do with their future even if they are capable of going to college (Hoxby & Avery, 2013, p. 25). These students are not able to come back to the community with the knowledge or experience that will increase the community's social and economic conditions.

4.3.4 Effect of Budget on Proficiency-Based Learning

The budget influences the quality of education a student receives. In Maine the story repeats itself when it comes to the budget limiting what can be done. When education reform is created there becomes higher demands, but the revenue and funding remain stagnant. The revenues remaining stagnant because the state of Maine is an anti-tax state. In 2016 the state voted yes on a referendum that increased taxes 3% on people with incomes of \$200,000 and funnel all of this money into education. This was repealed by the legislature and replaced with funding that was only temporarily available (Educate Maine, 2015, p. 3). The choice Mainers made about increasing the tax to have a permanent increased revenue source education funding was repealed because of the legislature's views on increasing taxes. This aversion to having higher taxes, and allowing for increases in taxes, makes it so there is an inability to increase the education budget.

It can be seen with the case study of proficiency-based learning that the tension between heightened demands and inadequate resources made it difficult for the reform to be created and implemented. The proposal of proficiency-based learning required each district to teach within eight content areas and create specific topics within each area students would need to be proficient in. These topics were not given to schools by the states, so each department needed to

decide what these would be and how they would have students prove proficiency. To ensure all eight content areas were being taught required more resources. Additionally, creating these topics and assessments also required more resources. Though there was a demand for more resources, this was not met. Proficiency-based learning had no additional funding tied to it initially. The final Act gave school departments a 1% budget increase, but this did not provide enough funding to meet these new demands (Silvernail, Stump, McCafferty, & Hawes, 2014, p. 35).

This stagnation of resources meant school departments were being required to create a new system that provided more but with the old funding levels. Without additional funding, it was very difficult for school departments to be able to create the system of proficiency-based learning and implement it. The policy created a burden on all schools, but some communities felt a more adverse effect. The burden fell heaviest upon those who were not able to add supplemental funding to their budget and primarily relied on state funding. This burden which was felt by departments in areas with lower resources influenced the votes that were cast for proficiency-based learning.

Figure 4.3.3 and 4.3.4 show rural communities have higher levels of poverty and lower median incomes. These counties have school departments that rely heavily on state funding rather than local funding. In addition, these schools anticipate receiving more aid because they are located in a rural county which allows them to receive a regional adjustment of additional funds. When one looks at how the votes were cast for proficiency-based learning, it can be seen that counties that perceived they would face a heavier burden from the policy voted no. The figures, 4.1.3 and 4.1.4, show the no votes were more likely to come from rural counties. This illustrates that the budget and the perceived burden that schools will face from differing policies

options influences support for policy. In addition, the social and economic conditions that these communities face impacts how they perceive a policy to affect their community. Rural legislators were able to correctly understand how proficiency-based learning would create larger burdens for their schools due to the fact they do not have the resources to fund the new demands that this policy mandates. The cultural divide between urban and rural counties also is a factor to why these communities do not have additional funding. Rural communities generally oppose policy that increases funding, even if this will benefit them. Their opposition to property tax, as Cramer found, means that they are unable to generate supplemental funding that would benefit their schools. This confirms my research proposition that the differing economic condition of communities in Maine create difficulty in reaching an agreement on funding for education policy that will allow for the successful implementation.

As this section showed, the budget, social and economic conditions, and type of community as student lives in all effect the education a student is getting. Compared to the rest of the country Maine spends more on per pupil expenditures, but there are high levels of variation between each school department's per pupil expenditures. This variation is driven by social and economic conditions that are prevalent within a community. The differences that exist between school departments effect how the education policy is voted upon and implemented. As it was shown there was bipartisan support for proficiency-based learning, but there were differences between urban and rural legislators. The rural communities, who generally have worse social and economic conditions, voted against proficiency-based learning in larger percentages than urban legislators. This confirms that that the social and economic condition and the school budget effects what education policy people see as viable and conducive to their school.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to identify what factors are creating an environment that is not conducive to adopting and successfully implementing education policy in Maine. In order to do this, proficiency-based learning was used as a case study policy. It can be seen that all of these factors contribute to the creations of an unfavorable environment. The factor that has the most leverage over this environment is the urban-rural divide. This divide, established in section 4.1, influences all of the other factors. This divide created the opportunity for a populist governor to be elected, it fuels polarization, and it creates difference in economic and social conditions. This divide has the most leverage out of all the factors analyzed.

This urban-rural divide leads rural people to view policy through a rural lens. This shapes their preferences and causes them to favor local control over state control. These rural communities favor local control because they perceive the state government as neglecting them and not understanding their needs. This creates a demand for high levels of local control within education policy. This local control needs to be incorporated into education policy so there can be enough support for the policy to pass. In addition, these rural communities feel property taxes are unfairly being taken from their communities and redirected to the urban communities. Even though this is not accurate, this perception leads them to be opposed to the increase in property taxes even when it would create more supplemental funding for their school's budget. This urban-rural divide creates demands out of education policy which weakens it and does not allow its goals to be achieved.

The polarization that the urban-rural divide fuels, creates policy that has conflicting and conflated goals. This polarization transcends partisan lines and is driven by geography and level of government control. By using proficiency-based learning it can be seen that the state is unable

to find a compromise between local and state control that allows for successful implementation and maintenance of education policy. The state must relinquish control to local governments in order for education policy to be enacted, and this leads to conflicting and conflated policy goals. As proficiency-based learning showed, the policy goal was to ensure that each student was showing proficiency in the same content areas. Another goal, due to the demand of local control, was to allow for local school departments to establish their own systems. These two goals were in contradiction with one another, but the policy would have not been passed without giving local governments control. This shows how the polarization creates an environment where education policy inherently has conflicting goals. This leads to a cycle of creating local education policy that recreates the status quo rather than brings statewide gains in achievement and quality of education.

In order for Maine to create and sustain education policy that allows for more equal education across the state there needs to be more state control. On the surface rural communities are likely to oppose this, but by communicating and incorporating these communities in the shift I believe they would be more receptive. If these rural communities are part of the conversation, they are less likely to think their needs are being overlooked and neglected. In the past when Maine created policy that gave control to the state, there was no communication with school departments and communities about what this would look like. Maine needs to create a system with the help of school departments from urban and rural areas that allows for the state to be able to track how well students are progressing and compare the schools throughout the state.

I think implementing exit tests from specific classes that all students across the state take, such as sophomore year English, chemistry, or algebra, would allow for this. Local school departments would still have control over their curriculum, hiring teachers, and how to allocate

their budget. This would still allow for high levels of local control in determining how to best educate students. The only difference would be administering exit tests in specific classes. This would allow the state to gauge the education inequality within the state. With this information they could create targeted policy to assist the schools that are not producing as high of scores. This level of state control would allow for an easier trajectory of creating equal education for all students to be followed.

The urban-rural divide influencing education policy is not unique to Maine. This divide is something that can be seen across the United States as having a large impact on politics. In the last presidential election, it can be seen the Donald Trump was able to target this cleavage and mobilize rural voters to support him. This cleavage does not only polarize education policy but impacts the larger political process. If Maine is an indication, the political process could become less polarized due to partisanship and move to polarization due to geography. As Katherine Cramer found, many of the rural residents in Wisconsin supported Obama, a Democrat, and then two years later supported Governor Walker, a Republican. These rural residents are shifting their lens from a partisan one to a geographic one. This case study of Maine can help to exemplify the implications that this larger trend has on the political process.

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